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The Struggle of a Soul

BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH

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The Struggle of A Soul

A Sequel to The Lost Lady of Lone

By MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of

"Nearest and Dearest," "Gloria," "Em," "For Whose Sake," "Lilith," "The Unloved Wife," Etc.

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The Struggle of a Soul

CHAPTER I

THE VINDICATION

"Let Ferguson be recalled!"

The order was given. And the Lone saddler's red-headed apprentice took the stand.

Mr. Justice Guthrie referred to some notes that had been passed to him by the Duke of Hereward, and then said:

"Witness, you told the jury that on the night before the murder of Sir Lemuel Levison, you were employed in your master's service up to a late hour."

"Ay, your honor; but I waur fain to see the wedding decorations, for a' that," said the boy.

"Precisely. But now tell the jury what was the service upon which you were employed to so late an hour that night."

"It wad be a bit wedding offering to our laird, wha hae always favored his ain folks wi' his custom. It waur a Russia leather traveling dressing-bag for his lairdship, the whilk the master had ta'en unco guid care. suld be as braw a bag as ony to be boughten in Lunnen

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town itsel', whilk mysel' was commissioned, and proud I waur, to tak', wi' my master's duty, to his lairdship."

"Doubtless. Now tell the jury at what hour you took this wedding offering to Lord Arondelle."

"Aweel, it wad be about half-past nine o'clock. I went wi' the dressing-case to the Arondelle Arms, where his lairdship and his lairdship's feyther, the auld duk' were biding. The hostler telt me that his lairdship had gane for a walk o'er the brig to Castle Lone. Sae I were fain to wait there for him."

"How long did you wait?"

"Na lang. I was na mair than five minutes before I saw his lairdship coming o'er the brig toward the house. And sune his lairdship came into the inn, and I made my bow, and offered his lairdship the wedding-gift, wi' my maister's respectful guid wishes. His lairdship smiled pleasantly, and tauld me to fetch it after him up to his chamber. I followed my laird upstairs to his ain room, where his lairdship's valet, Mr. Kerr, was waiting on him. His lairdship wrote a braw note of acknowledgments to my maister, and gie it me to take away. My laird also gie me a half-sovereign, for mysel'. I dinna tak' the note just then to my maister. I saw by the clock on the mantel that it only lacked a quarter to ten o'clock, sae I e'en made my duty to his lairdship and run downstairs, ran a' the way o'er to Castle Lone, for I war fain to see the decorations. I got to Malcolm's Tower just in time to hear the auld clock in the turret strike eleven, and to see the mon and the woman meet thegither in the shadows."

"Are you sure that you could not identify that man or woman?"

"Anan?"

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"Would you know either of them again?" inquired Mr. Guthrie, changing the manner of his question.

"Na! I tauld ye sae before. They were half hidden i' the bushes."

"You say it was a quarter to ten when you left Lord Arondelle in his room at the inn?"

"Ay, war it."

"And that it was eleven o'clock when you witnessed the meeting between the man and the woman at Castle Lone?"

"Ay, war it. And I had to run a' the way to do it in that time. It waur guid rinning."

"You left his lordship's valet with him, do you say?"

"Ay, I did. And the head waiter o' the Arondelle Arms, too, wha was just gaeing in wi' his lairdship's supper."

"That will do. You may now stand down," said Mr. Guthrie.

The shock-headed apprentice, who had done such good service to his Grace the Duke of Hereward, and such damage to the false witness against him, now left the stand and made his way through the crowd to his distant seat.

Mr. Guthrie once more got upon his feet to address the Bench, and said:

"May it please the Court, I move that the testimony of the Crown's witness, Rose Cameron, alias Rose Scott, be set aside as totally unreliable; and, further, that she be indicted for perjury."

Upon this motion of Mr. Guthrie there followed some discussion among the lawyers.

Finally it was decided to put the duke's valet, the hotel waiter, and other witnesses, on the stand, who

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would be able to corroborate or rebut the evidence given by the lad Ferguson, and thereby break down or establish the testimony offered by Rose Cameron.

James Kerr was, therefore, called to the witness-stand, sworn and examined.

He said that he had been in the service of the duke's family ever since he was nine years of age, first as page to the late duchess, but for the last three years as valet to the present duke; that he was with his master at the "Arondelle Arms" on the night of the murder; that the duke, who was then the Marquis of Arondelle, left the inn at half-past eight o'clock, to walk over the bridge to Castle Lone; that he returned at half-past nine, accompanied to his room by the boy Ferguson, who brought a handsome Russia leather traveling-case; that the marquis sat down to his writing-table, wrote a note and gave it to the boy, who immediately left the house.

"At what hour was this?" inquired Mr. Guthrie.

"It was a few minutes before ten. The clock struck very soon after the boy left. I remember it well, because his lordship's supper had been ordered for ten, and the waiter just entered to lay the cloth when the lad left, and his lordship sat down to supper at ten precisely. After the supper-service had been removed, his lordship went to his writing-desk and wrote for an hour, and then sealed and dispatched a packet directed to the *Liberal Statesman*. I took it myself to the Post-Office, to ensure its being in time for the midnight mail. It was then about half-past eleven o'clock. I was gone on my message for about five minutes. On my return I found my master where I had left him, sitting at his writing-desk, arranging his papers. But when I entered he locked his desk and said he would go to bed. I

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waited on him at his night toilet. And then, as the inn was very much crowded, I slept on a lounge in my master's bedroom. The house was full of noise; so many of the Scots were present, making merry over the approaching marriage of their chieftain's son. Neither my master nor myself rested well that night. I arose early to see my master's bath. The marquis arose at eight o'clock."

Such was the substance of James Kerr's testimony, which perfectly corroborated that of the lad Ferguson, and greatly damaged that of Rose Cameron.

The hotel waiter happened to be among those who had cast all their worldly interests to the winds, abandoned their callings of whatever sort, and come at all risk of consequences to be present at the trial. He was found in the court room, called to the witness stand, sworn and examined.

His testimony corroborated that of the two last witnesses, and utterly broke down that of Rose Cameron.

There was further consultation between the Bar and the Bench. Finally the testimony of the Crown's witness was set aside, and a warrant was made out for the arrest of Rose Cameron, otherwise Rose Scott, upon the charge of perjury.

The warrant was sent out to the sheriff's room, to which, after leaving the witness-stand, Rose Cameron had been conducted.

And now the crowd in the court room, composed chiefly of neighbors, friends, kinsmen and clansmen of the young Duke of Hereward, breathed freely.

The thunder-cloud had passed.

Their hero was vindicated. Truly they had never for an instant doubted his integrity, much less had they sus-

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pected him of a heinous, an atrocious crime. Still, it was an immense relief to have the black shadow of that bloody charge withdrawn.

There was but one more witness for the prosecution to be examined; that witness was no less a person than the young Duke of Hereward himself.

He was called to the stand, and sworn.

Every pair of eyes in the court-room availed themselves of the opportunity afforded by the elevated position of the witness stand, to gaze on the man who had so recently been the subject of such a terrible accusation; and all admired the calmness, self-possession, and forbearance of his conduct during the fearful ordeal through which he had just passed.

He simply testified as to the finding of the dead body, the position of the corpse, the condition of the room, and so forth. He was not subjected to a cross-examination, but was courteously notified that he was at liberty to retire.

He resumed his former seat.

The case for the prosecution was closed.

Mr. Kinlock, junior counsel for the prisoner, arose for the defence. He made a short address to the jury, in which he spoke of the slight grounds upon which his unhappy client had been charged with an atrocious crime, and brought to trial for his life. The law demanded a victim for that heinous crime, which had shocked the whole community from its centre to its circumference, and his unfortunate client had been selected as a sin offering. He reminded the jury how the very esteem and confidence of the master and the fidelity and obedience of the servant had been most ingeniously turned into strong circumstantial evidence, to fix the

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assassination of the master upon the servant. The deceased had entirely trusted the prisoner; had given him a passkey with which he might enter his chambers at any hour of the day or night; and hence it was argued that the prisoner, being the only one who had the entree to the deceased's apartments, must have been the person who admitted the murderer to his victim. The prisoner had faithfully obeyed his master's orders for the day, in declining to enter his rooms before his bell should ring; and thence it was argued that he only delayed to call his master because he knew that master lay murdered in his room, and he wished to give the murderers, with whom he was said to be confederated, time to make good their escape. He was sure, he said, that a just and intelligent jury must at once perceive the cruel injustice of such far-fetched inferences. In addition he would call witnesses who would testify to the good character of the accused, and prove that the great esteem and confidence in which he had been held by his late master was abundantly justified by the excellent character and blameless conduct of the servant.

Mr. Kinlock then proceeded to call his witnesses.

They were the fellow-servants of the accused. Some of them were the very same witnesses that had been called by the prosecution, and were now re-called for the defence. One and all, in turn, testified to the uniform good behavior of the valet while in the service of Sir Lemuel Levison, deceased.

The presiding judge, Baron Stairs, summed up the evidence in a very few words.

The evidence against the prisoner at the bar was circumstantial only. It had appeared in evidence that some servant of the family had admitted the assassin to

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the house. It did not appear who that servant was. The valet, John Potts, was the only one who had the passkey to the apartments of the deceased. That circumstance had fixed suspicion upon him; had brought him to trial; the trial had brought out no new facts; the witness principally relied on by the prosecution had not only failed to give any testimony to convict the prisoner, but had certainly perjured herself to shield the real criminal, whoever he was, and to accuse a noble personage, whose high character and lofty station alike placed him infinitely above suspicion. On the other hand, many witnesses had testified to the good character and conduct of the prisoner, and the estimation in which he had been held by his late master. Such was the evidence, pro and con.

His lordship concluded by saying that the jury might now retire and deliberate upon their verdict, remembering that in all cases of uncertainty they should lean to the side of mercy.

The jury arose from their seats, and, conducted by a bailiff, retired to the room provided for them.

Many of the people now left the court room to get refreshments.

But as the judges remained upon the bench, the Duke of Hereward kept his seat. He felt sure the jury would not long deliberate before bringing in their verdict.

Meanwhile he turned to glance at the prisoner.

John Potts looked like a man without a hope in the world. We have already seen that an awful change had come over him since the day of his arrest, three months before. Now, as he leaned forward where he sat, and rested his head upon his skeleton hands, that clasped the top of the railing of the dock, his face, or what could

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be seen of it, was ghastly pale with agony, while his emaciated frame trembled from head to foot. *He looked like a guilty man.* And his looks were now, as they had been from the moment in which the dead body of his master had been discovered, the strongest testimony against him.

For all that, you know, they cannot hang a man merely because he looks as if he ought to be hung.

After an absence of about fifteen minutes, the jury, led by a bailiff, returned to the court room.

The prisoner looked up, shivered, and dropped his head upon his clasped hands again.

The dead silence of breathless expectation in the courtroom was now broken by the solemn voice of the Clerk of Arraigns, inquiring, in measured tones:

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We have," answered the foreman, a jolly, red-headed, round-bodied Banff baker.

"Prisoner at the bar, stand up and look upon the jury," ordered the clerk.

The poor, abject, and terrified wretch tottered to his feet and stood, pallid, shaking and grasping the front rails of the dock for support.

"Gentlemen of the jury, look upon the prisoner. How say you, is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty of the felony herewith he stands charged?" demanded the clerk.

"We find the charge against the prisoner to be—NOT PROVEN,"* answered the foreman, speaking for the whole in a strong, distinct voice, that was heard all over the courtroom.

*"Not Proven"—a Scotch verdict in uncertain cases.

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On hearing the verdict which saved him from death, even if it did not vindicate him, John Potts let go the rails of the dock and fell back in his chair in a half-fainting condition.

"The prisoner is discharged from custody. The Court is adjourned," said the presiding baron, rising and leaving his seat.

While one of the bailiffs was kindly supporting the faltering steps of the released prisoner, in taking him from the dock, and while the crowd in the courtroom were pouring out of the front doors, the presiding judge, Baron Stairs, came down to the place where the young Duke of Hereward still sat. He had known the duke's father, and had also known the duke himself from boyhood. He now held out his hand cordially, saying:

"I am very glad to see your grace, though the occasion is a painful one. Let me congratulate you on your marriage. I wish you every good thing in life. You have already got the *best* thing—a good wife. I knew Miss Levison. A finer young woman never lived. I congratulate you with all my heart, Duke!"

"I thank you very much, Lord Stairs," said the bridegroom, warmly returning the greeting of the judge.

"But I fear I must condole with you also. It was really too bad to have your honeymoon eclipsed at its rising, by a summons to attend as a witness on a criminal trial!—too bad! However, fortunately, the trial was a short one. And you are now at liberty to fly to your bride! I hope the duchess is well," added the judge.

"She has never been quite well, I grieve to say, since the catastrophe at Lone," answered the duke, evasively.

"Ah, no! ah, no! It cannot be expected that she should be so yet. It will take time! It will take time!

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By the way, where are you stopping, my dear Duke? I am at the 'Prince Consort!' Will you come home with me and dine?" heartily inquired the baron.

"Many thanks, my lord. But I am not staying in town. I must hurry back to Lone this evening in order to secure the midnight express to London. The most important business demands my immediate presence there," gravely replied the young duke.

"Ah, of course! of course! the bride! the duchess! Certainly, my dear duke. I will not press you further," said the baron, laughing cordially.

Neither of the gentlemen made the slightest allusion to the testimony given by the crown's evidence which had cast so foul and false an aspersion on the character of the duke.

By this time the court-room was nearly emptied.

The duke and the baron walked out together.

The crowd had dispersed from before the courthouse.

The duke and the baron shook hands and parted on the sidewalk.

"Give my warm respects to the duchess. Tell her grace that I shall hope to meet her and present my congratulations in person, on her return from the Continent. That will be in time for the meeting of Parliament, I presume," said his lordship, as he was about to step into his carriage.

"Thanks, my lord. Yes, I hope so," answered his grace, as he lifted his hat and turned away.

The baron's carriage drove off to his hotel.

The duke walked rapidly to the inn, where he had ordered his post-chaise to be put up.

He partook of a light luncheon while his horses were being harnessed, and then entered the chaise, attended

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by his valet, and ordered the coachman to drive as fast as possible, without hurting the horses, to Lone.

He was most anxious to reach the "Arondelle Arms," to see if any telegram from Detective Setter had reached the office for him.

So long as the road ran through the Firwood, and was comparatively smooth and level, the coachman kept his horses at their best speed; but when it entered the mountain pass of the chain running around Loch Lone, he was compelled to drive slowly and carefully.

The sun set before they emerged from the pass, and it was nearly dark when the chaise drew up before the Arondelle Arms.

The duke got out of the chaise, and passed through the little assemblage of villagers who were standing there discussing the verdict of the jury. He hurried at once to the barroom to inquire if any letter or telegram had come for him.

"Na, naething o' the sort," replied the landlord, who, seeing the disappointment expressed upon the duke's face, added: "But, under favor, your grace, there's time eneuch yet. Your grace hae na been twenty-four hours awa' fra Lunnun."

Without waiting to answer the host, the young duke hurried out, and walked rapidly off to the telegraph office, which was at the railway station.

"Ye see yon lad?" said the landlord to his wife. "He hanna been a day fra his bride, and yet he expects to hae a letter or a message frae her every minute. Aweel, we hae a' been fules in our time!"

So saying, the philosophical host of the Arondelle Arms gave his mind to the service of his numerous customers, who had come from the trial at Banff very hun-

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gry and thirsty, and now filled the barroom with their persons, and all the air with their complaints.

They were not at all satisfied with the verdict. They had had a murder, and they had a right to have a hanging. They had been defrauded of their prospect of this second entertainment, and they were not well pleased.

Meanwhile, the duke hurried off to the telegraph office, to see if by any chance a telegram had been received there for him and detained.

When he entered the little den, he found the operator at work. He forebore to interrupt the man until the clicking of the wires ceased. Then he asked:

"Can you tell if there is any message here for me? —the Duke of Hereward," added his grace, seeing the puzzled look of the operator, who was a stranger in the country.

"Yes, your grace. It has only just now come," respectfully answered the young man, as he drew out a long, narrow strip of thick, white paper, upon which the message had been stamped by the instrument, and proceeded to select an official envelope in which to inclose it.

"Never mind that. Give it to me at once," said the duke, taking the strip from the hand of the operator and hastily perusing it.

The message ran thus:

"Old Church Court, Kensington, London,
October 31st, 3 P. M.

"To His Grace the Duke of Hereward, Arondelle Arms, Lone, N. B.—She is found. Pray come to London immediately. It is important.

"J. A. Setter."

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CHAPTER II

WHO WAS FOUND?

"SHE is found."

"Who is found? The lost bride, or that mysterious messenger who was with the fugitive an hour before her flight, who was suspected to have lured her away, and who might be able to give a clew to her whereabouts? Good Heaven! why could not the detective have sent a definite message?" thought the duke, as he studied the telegram.

Suddenly his face lighted up as he said to himself. "It is Salome who is found! Of course it must be Salome, since no one else was really lost. It is Salome, and that is the very reason why Setter spoke so indefinitely; for I remember now that I instructed him to avoid using the name of the duchess in any telegram. Salome is found! Ah! I thank Heaven! She is found! But," he reflected, with a sudden reaction of feeling, "how, where, when, by whom, under what circumstances was my bride found? Is she well or ill? Can she give any satisfactory explanation of her absence?" were the next anxious, soul-racking questions that chased each other through his mind.

"Oh, for the strong pinions of the eagle, that I might fly to her at once and satisfy all these anxious doubts," he breathed.

It was now but six o'clock in the afternoon. The first train for London would not stop at Lone until midnight, and would not reach London until eight o'clock the next morning—fourteen hours of suspense!

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He could not bear that.

The telegraph operator was about to close the office.

The duke stopped him by saying:

"I wish to send a telegram to London."

"It is after hours, your grace," answered the operator, very deferentially.

"I will pay you whatever you may demand for your extra services, over and above your usual fee," said the duke.

The operator hesitated.

"That is to say, if there is no rule in your office to forbid it," added the duke.

"There is no rule to prevent it, your grace. My time is up, and I was about to go home to supper, that was all. I will send your grace's message, if you please," the operator explained, as he took his seat again.

The duke hastily dashed off the following message:

"Lone, N. B., October 31st, 6 P. M.

"To J. A. Setter, Police Station, Old Church Court, Kensington, London:—Shall leave for London by this midnight express train. Is she quite well? Answer immediately. Hereward."

The operator took the message with a bow. The click of the instrument was soon heard, as the message, with the speed of light, flew on its errand.

"Will you remain here until I can receive an answer?" inquired the duke, as soon as the sound ceased.

"I should be happy to accommodate your grace; but if there should be no answer, say up to twelve o'clock?" suggested the young man.

"In that case I should not ask you to remain; as you

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must know by my telegram that I am to take the train for London at that hour."

"Certainly, your grace; but I thought it possible that you might wish the message taken to some other person in the event of your absence."

"Not at all. I want it for myself alone. If it does not come before twelve, I shall have no use for it."

"Then I will remain here until midnight, if necessary; but it may not be necessary."

"And you shall set your own price upon your time," said the duke.

"Thanks, your grace; I am happy to be able to accommodate you; and would prefer to leave all other considerations to yourself," said the young man, very politely and—politicly.

Even while they spoke, a warning vibration of the wires was perceived, followed by the *click, click, click* of the instrument.

"There is a message coming—most probably an answer to yours, though it is very soon to get one," said the operator, as he turned to give his whole attention to his work.

The duke looked on with breathless eagerness.

As soon as the sound ceased, the operator drew off the message and handed it to the duke, who seized it and hastily read:

"LONDON, October 31st, 7 P. M.

"TO THE DUKE OF HEREWARD, Lone, N. B.: She is perfectly well. J. A. SETTER."

"Thank Heaven! I breathe freely now!" said the young duke to himself, as he arose from his seat.

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He liberally rewarded the telegraph operator, and then left the office and walked back to the inn.

The Arondelle Arms was all alive with excitement. More travelers had come down from Banff, and the inn was crowded, principally by men of the Clan Scott. Every room was filled, every window lighted up. The bar and the taproom reeked.

The duke was making his way through the crowd as best he might, when he was met by the landlord, who bowed, and apologized, and finally offered to conduct his grace by a private entrance to the parlor connected with the duke's own reserved suit of apartments.

"An' noo, what will your grace hae to your supper?" hospitably inquired the host, as soon as his guest was comfortably seated in his armchair before the fire.

"Anything at all, so that it is cleanly served, for which I can, of course, trust the Arondelle Arms," said the duke, smiling.

The landlord bowed and went out.

The duke leaned back in his chair, and stretched his feet to the genial warmth of the fire.

He was feeling very happy. An immense load of anxiety was lifted from his heart. She was found! She was perfectly well! In twelve hours he would see her, and hear her own explanation of her very strange conduct. Her explanation would be perfectly satisfactory. So great was his confidence in her that he felt sure of this.

She was found. She was perfectly well. There was nothing to prevent them from starting on their wedding tour as soon as they might wish to do so. They would, therefore, leave London by the tidal train for Dover on the next afternoon. The world would take it for granted

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that the wedding tour had been interrupted and delayed only by the trial. The world would never suspect Salome's strange escapade.

While these thoughts were passing through the mind of the duke, the waiter came in and laid the cloth for supper.

And soon the landlord himself entered, bearing a tray on which was arranged a choice bill of fare, the principal item of which was a roasted pheasant.

The duke, who had scarcely tasted food during the twenty-four hours of his terrible anxiety, now that his anxiety was relieved, felt his appetite return, demanding refreshment at the rate of compound interest.

He sat down to the table. The landlord waited on him.

The honest host of the Arondelle Arms was "dying," so to speak, for a confidential conversation with his noble guest. For some little time his respect for the Duke of Hereward held his curiosity in check; but at length curiosity conquered respect, and he burst forth with:

"That wad be an unco impudent claim, the hizzie Rose Cameron tried to set up again your grace, as I hear all the folk say out by—the jaud maunn be clean daft."

"It would be charitable to suppose that she is 'daft,' as you call it, landlord. It would be well if a jury could be persuaded to think so, as, in that case, it would save her from the penalty of perjury. But we will speak no more of the poor girl. Take away the service, if you please," said the duke, quietly.

The landlord, balked of his desire to gossip, bowed, and cleared the table.

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It was not yet nine o'clock. There were more than three hours to be passed before the express train for London would reach Lone.

The duke, refreshed by his supper, felt no sense of weariness, no disposition to lie down and sleep away the three remaining hours of his stay. His mind was in too excited a condition to think of sleep. Neither could he read.

So, soon after he was left alone by the landlord, he arose and sauntered out through the private entrance into the night air.

The streets of the village were very quiet, for the reason that on this night the men were all collected at the Arondelle Arms, discussing the events of the day; and at this hour the women were all sure to be in their houses, putting their children to bed, setting bread to rise, or "garring th' auld claithes luke amaist as guid as the new."

The hamlet was very still under the starlit sky.

The Arondelle Arms, lighted up and musical, was the only noisy spot about it.

The mountains stood, grand and silent, like gigantic sentinels around it.

The lake, the island, and the castle of Lone lay beneath it.

A sudden impulse seized the duke to cross the bridge, and revisit once more the home of his youth, the scene of his family's disaster, the stage of that frightful tragedy which had shocked the civilized world.

He went down to the beach, and stepped upon the bridge. Now, no floral wedding decorations wreathed the arches. All was bare and bleak beneath the last October sky.

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He crossed the bridge and entered on the grounds of the castle. All here was sear under the late autumnal frosts. He did not approach the castle walls. He would not disturb the servants at this hour. He walked about the grounds until he heard the clock in Malcolm's Old Tower strike ten. Then he turned his steps toward the hamlet.

Just before he reached the bridge, he overtook the tall, dark figure of a man, clothed in a long, close overcoat, in shape not unlike a priest's walking habit. The man tottered and stumbled as he walked, so that the duke was soon abreast of him. And then he discovered the wanderer to be John Potts, valet to the late Sir Lemuel Levison.

The young Duke of Hereward shrank from this man. He could not bring himself to speak with one whom he could not, in his own mind, clear from suspicion.

He passed the valet, walking quickly, and gaining the bridge.

Then he heard footsteps rapidly following him, and the voice of the ex-valet excitedly calling after him:

"My Lord Arondelle! oh! I beg pardon! Your grace! Your grace! For the love of Heaven, let me speak to you!"

Thus adjured, the Duke of Hereward paused, and permitted the ex-valet to come up beside him.

The wretched man was out of breath, pale, panting, trembling, ready to faint. He tottered toward the bulwarks of the bridge, grasped them, and leaned on them for support.

"What do you want of me, Potts?" inquired the duke.

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"Oh, your grace! only to speak to you!" gasped the man.

"What can you have to say to me?" sternly demanded the duke.

"*This,* your grace!" said the man, suddenly springing forward and falling on his knees at the feet of the duke. "*This* I have to say, your grace! Although the Court has not cleared me, I am innocent of my master's blood! I am! I am! I am! as the Heaven above us hears and knows! Oh, say you believe me, my lord duke!" cried the poor wretch, wringing his hands.

"Your words and manner are very impressive; nevertheless, I cannot place confidence in them," said the duke, coldly.

"Oh, my lord! my lord! Oh, my lord! my lord!" groaned the valet, lifting both his hands to heaven, as if in appeal from a great injustice.

The duke was moved.

"If you *are* guiltless, why should you care whether I, or any other fallible mortal, should consider you guilty?" he inquired.

"Oh," cried the man, clasping his hands with the energy of despair, "because everybody thinks me guilty! *No* one believes me innocent, though I am guiltless of my master's blood, so help me Heaven!"

"The circumstances, though not enough to convict you in a court of law, where every doubt must go in favor of the accused, were still strong enough to lay you under suspicion, and open to a second arrest and trial for your life, should new evidence turn up," quietly replied the duke.

"I know it! I know it, your grace. But no new evidence against me can turn up! Lord grant that evi-

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dence in my favor might do so! But that cannot happen either. The circumstances that accused, but could not convict, nor acquit me, leave me still under the ban! Yes! under the ban I must remain! But do not *you*, my lord duke, believe me guilty of my master's death! Guilty of much I am! Guilty of neglect of duty, but not of my master's death! The Heavens that hear me know it! Oh, pray, pray try to believe it, my lord duke!" pleaded the wretch, still kneeling, still lifting his clasped hands in an agony of appeal.

"Get upon your feet, Potts. Never kneel to any man. To do so is to degrade yourself and the man to whom you kneel. Get up, before I speak another word to you," said the duke.

The miserable creature struggled to his feet and stood leaning against the bulwarks of the bridge, for support.

"Now, then, if you are not guilty, if your conscience acquits you in the sight of Heaven of all complicity in your late master's death, why should you feel and show such extreme distress—distress that has worn your frame to a skeleton, and stricken your life with old age?" gravely demanded the duke.

"Why?—oh, your grace! I loved my master as a son his father! He was more like a father than a master to me. And he was cut off suddenly by a bloody death! In the midst of my grief for his loss I was arrested and accused of murdering him—my beloved master. I have seen the gallows looming before me for the last three months. I have been shut in prison, with no companions but my own awful thoughts. I have been put on trial for my life. And though the jury could not convict me, it would not acquit me! though I am set at large for the present, I am subject to re-arrest and trial

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for death, if new evidence, however false, should arise against me. Meanwhile, no one believes me innocent. All believe me guilty. No one will ever speak to me. They made the inn too hot to hold me. My life is ruined—my heart is broken! Is not all that enough, lord duke, to have worn my body to a skeleton and turned my hair gray, without remorse of conscience?" impetuously demanded the man.

"No, Potts, it is not. Nothing but remorse, it seems to me, could so reduce a man," gravely replied the duke.

"Oh, your grace! you still believe me guilty of my good master's murder!" passionately exclaimed the man. "Ah, Heaven! what will become of me? I shall die unless I can have the stay of *some* one's faith in me!"

"Potts," said the duke, in a softened tone, "I do not now think that you had any active or conscious share in the foul murder of Sir Lemuel Levison. But not the less do I see that you are suffering from remorse. *You are still keeping something back from me!*" he added, very solemnly.

The valet groaned, but made no answer.

"That is the reason why I have no confidence in you," said his grace.

The valet wrung his gaunt hands, but continued silent.

"Now I do not ask you to confide in me; but I will give you this warning—so long as you hold in your bosom a secret which, if revealed, would bring the real criminal to justice, so long you will yourself remain the object of suspicion from others and the victim of remorse in yourself. Now, Potts, I must leave you; for I must get to Lone in time to catch the London express. Good-night," said the duke, as he moved away.

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"One moment more, oh, my lord duke! for the love of Heaven! One moment to do a piece of justice," pleaded the ex-valet, tottering after the young nobleman.

"Well, well, what is it now?" inquired the latter, pausing and turning back.

"That poor, misguided girl, Rose Cameron," said the valet.

"Well, what of *her,* man?" impatiently demanded the young nobleman.

"Listen, my lord duke! You saw her committed to prison on the charge of perjury."

"A charge that she was self-convicted of."

"My lord duke, she was not guilty of perjury!" sighed the valet.

"What! What is that you say?" quickly demanded the duke.

"I say, Rose Cameron, poor misguided girl that she was, did not, however, perjure herself—*intentionally,* I mean," repeated John Potts.

"Is she *mad,* then? The victim of a monomania?" gravely inquired the duke, fixing his eyes upon the troubled face of the valet.

"No, your grace, she was never more in her right senses."

"What do you mean? Do you *dare*——"

"My lord duke, I dare nothing. I never was a daring man; if I had been, the daring would have been taken out of me by the troubles of this last quarter of a year! But, my lord duke, I am right. Rose Cameron did not intentionally perjure herself, neither is she mad. Rose Cameron believes in her heart every word of the statement she made under oath in the open court this morning."

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While the man thus spoke, the duke looked fixedly at him in perfect silence, in the forlorn hope of hearing some solution to the enigma.

"Rose Cameron was deceived, my lord duke—grossly, cruelly, basely deceived—not in one respect only, but in many. She was, first of all, deceived into the idea of being the wife of a gentleman of high rank, when, in fact, she is nobody's wife at all. Next she was deceived into becoming an accomplice in a robbery and murder, of which she was as ignorant and as innocent as—as *myself*. She could not have been more so!"

"Who was her deceiver?" sternly demanded the duke.

"I beg pardon. I know no more than your grace! I only presumed to speak about it, so as to explain the strange conduct of that poor girl, and clear her of intentional perjury in your sight," said the valet, meekly.

"Potts, you know much more than you are willing to divulge. You have, however, unwittingly given me a clew that I shall take care to follow up. Once more let me warn you to get rid of sinful secrets, and amend your life, if you wish to be at peace. Good-night."

So saying, the duke walked rapidly away to make up for the time lost in talking with the ex-valet.

It was after eleven o'clock when he reached the Arondelle Arms, yet the little hostel gave no signs of closing. The windows were all still ablaze with light, and the bar and the taproom were uproarious with fun. Evidently the Clan Scott had been drinking the health of the duke and duchess until they had become

"Glorious!
O'er all the ills of life victorious!"

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The duke slipped in at the private entrance and gained his own apartment, where he found his valet engaged in packing his valise.

He sent the man out to pay the tavern bill.

In a few minutes Kerr returned, accompanied by the landlord, who brought the receipt, and inquired if his grace would have a carriage.

"No," the duke said; as the distance was short, he preferred to walk to the station.

In a few minutes he left the inn, followed by his valet carrying his valise.

They caught the train in good time, having just secured their tickets when the warning shriek of the engine was heard, and it thundered up to the station and stopped.

The duke, followed by his servant, entered the coupé he had secured for the journey.

Three nights of sleeplessness, anxiety and fatigue had prostrated the vital forces of the young nobleman, and so, no sooner had the train started, than he sat himself comfortably back among his cushions, and, being now in a great measure relieved from suspense, he fell into a deep and dreamless sleep. This sleep continued almost unbroken through the night, and was only slightly disturbed by the bustle of arrival when the train reached a large city on its route. He awoke when it arrived at Peterborough; but fell asleep again, and slept through the long twilight of that first day of November.

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CHAPTER III

OFF THE TRACK

It was eight o'clock in the morning of a dark and cloudy day, when the duke was finally aroused by the noise and confusion attending the arrival of the Great Northern Express train at King's Cross Station, London.

He shook himself wide awake, adjusted his wrap, and sprang out of his coupé, while yet his servant was but just bestirring himself.

The first man he met in the station was Detective Setter.

"*How* is she?" eagerly inquired the traveler, hastening to meet the officer.

"She is perfectly well, and expresses herself as not only willing, but anxious to see your grace," replied the detective.

"*Not only willing!* that is a strange phrase, too! But I presume I shall understand it all when I see her. *Where* is she?" demanded the duke.

"At the house on Westminster Road. The address *was* Westminster, and not Blackfriars Road."

"At the house on Westminster Road! Did you find her there?"

"I did, your grace."

"But why, in the name of propriety and good sense, does she not return home?"

"Your grace, she is at home," said the perplexed detective.

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"Just now you told me that she was at the house on Westminster Road!" said the bewildered duke.

"Beg pardon, your grace, but the house on Westminster Road *is* her home. She has no other that I know of."

The duke stared at the detective a moment, and then hastily demanded:

"Who *are* you talking of?"

"Beg pardon again, your grace, but I am afraid there is some misunderstanding."

"*Who* are you talking about?"

"I am talking of the woman who came to the duchess just before she disappeared," answered the detective.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the duke, with such a look of deep disappointment that the detective hastened to deprecate his displeasure by saying:

"I am very sorry, your grace, that there should have been any misapprehension."

"You idiot!" were the words that arose spontaneously to the duke's lips; but they were not uttered. The "princely Hereward" habitually governed himself.

"Why did you not tell me in your telegram *who* was found?" he demanded.

"I certainly thought that your grace would have understood. In the telegram dispatched at nine o'clock yesterday morning, I told your grace that I had a clew to the woman who had called at Elmthorpe House on Tuesday. In the telegram sent at three in the afternoon, I said 'She is found.' I certainly thought your grace would understand that the woman to whom I had gained the clew was found. I grieve to know how much mistaken I was," sighed Mr. Setter.

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"Ah! that accounts for everything. I never received that first telegram."

"Your grace never received it?"

"Certainly not."

"Then my messenger was false to his trust. I was so indiscreet as to send it to the office by a ticket porter, believing the fellow would do his duty faithfully, after having been paid in advance. The more fool I. I am certainly old enough to have known better!" said the detective, with a mortified air.

"Well, Mr. Setter, it is useless to regret that mistake now. Be so good as to call a cab. We will go at once to Westminster Road and see this Mrs. Brown. What information has she given you?"

"None whatever, except this, which we knew before —that she visited the bride on the afternoon of the wedding day. She declines to tell *me* the nature of her business with the duchess; but says that she will explain it to you; she further denies all knowledge of the present abode of the duchess."

"Then we must lose no time in going to the woman," said the duke.

As he spoke, the cab which had been signalled by the detective drove up, and the cabman jumped down and opened the door.

The duke entered it and sat down on the back cushions.

His grace's servant, Kerr, came up to the window for orders.

"Take my luggage home to Elmthorpe House. Give my respects to Lady Belgrade, and say that I will join her ladyship this afternoon," said the duke.

The servant touched his hat and withdrew.

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"To Number ——, Westminster Road," ordered Mr. Setter, as he mounted to the box-seat beside the cabman.

The latter started his horses at a good rate of speed, so that a drive of about forty minutes brought them to their destination.

The detective jumped down and opened the door, saying:

"Excuse me, your grace; but, I think, perhaps, I ought to go in first to ensure you an interview with the woman?"

"By all means go in first, officer. I will remain here in the cab until you return to summon me," answered the duke.

Detective Setter went up to the door and knocked, and then waited a few seconds until the door was opened, and he was admitted by an unseen hand.

A few minutes elapsed, and then Detective Setter re-appeared, and came up to the cab and said:

"She will see you at once, early as it is, your grace. I do not know what in the world possesses the old woman; but she is chuckling in the most insane manner in the anticipation of meeting you, 'face to face,' as she calls it."

"Well, we shall soon see," said the duke, as, with a resigned air, he followed Mr. Setter into the house.

The detective led him upstairs to the gaudy parlor which had once been Rose Cameron's sitting-room.

There was no one present; but the detective handed a chair to the duke, and begged him to sit down and wait for Mrs. Brown's appearance.

The duke threw himself into the chair, and gazed around him upon the garish scene, until a chamber door

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opened, and Mrs. Brown, in her Sunday's best suit, sailed in. The duke arose.

Mrs. Brown came on toward him, courtesying stiffly, and saying:

"Good-morning to you, Mr. Scott! It is a many months since I have had the pleasure of seeing you in this house."

The duke was not so much amazed at this greeting as he might have been, had he not heard the astounding testimony of Rose Cameron. So he answered, quietly:

"I do not think, madam, that you ever 'had the pleasure' of seeing me 'in this house,' or, in fact, anywhere else. I have never seen *you* in my life before."

"Oh! oh! hear to the man! He would brazen it out to my very face!" exlaimed Mrs. Brown.

The duke started and flushed crimson as he stared at the woman.

"Oh, I am not afeard of you! Deuce a bit am I afeard of you! You may glare till your eyes drop out, but you'll not scare me! And you may be the Markiss of Arondelle and the Duke of Hereward, too, for aught I know, or care either! But you were just plain Mr. John Scott to me, and also to that poor, wronged lass whom you have betrayed into prison, if not unto death! And now, Mr. John Scott, as you wished to see me (and I can guess why you wished to see me), and as I have no objection to see you, besides having something of importance to tell you, perhaps you will send that man off," said Mrs. Brown, pointing to the detective.

"No. I prefer that Mr. Setter should stay here, and be a witness to all that passes between us," answered the duke.

"All right. It is no business of mine, and no *shame*

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of mine. Only I thought as you mightn't like a stranger to hear all your secrets, and I wish to spare your feelings," said the woman.

"I beg you will not consider my feelings in the least, madam," answered the duke, with a slight smile of amusement; "and I hope you will allow Mr. Setter to remain," he added.

"Oh, in course! *I* have no objection, if *you* have none."

"Pray go on and say what you have to say," urged the duke.

"Then, first of all, I have to tell you that I know why you have home here. You have come to inquire about Miss Salome Levison, the great banker's heiress."

"You are speaking of the Duchess of Hereward, madam," interrupted the duke, in a stern voice.

"No, I'm not. I am speaking of Miss Salome Levison. She is not the Duchess of Hereward. I don't know but one Duchess of Hereward, and *her you are ashamed to own,"* spitefully added Mrs. Brown.

"You are a woman, aged and insane, and therefore entitled to our utmost indulgence," said the duke, putting the strongest control upon himself. "But tell me now, what was your business with the Lady of Lone, upon whom you called at Elmthorpe House on Tuesday afternoon?"

"I went from your true wife, whom you had betrayed into prison, to your false wife, to let her know what you were, and to tell her that there was but one step between herself and ruin!"

"Good Heaven; you did that!" exclaimed the duke, utterly thrown off his guard.

"Yes, I did! And I showed the young lady your real

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wife's marriage lines, all regularly signed and witnessed by the rector of St. Margaret's and the sexton, and the pew-opener! I did! And there were letters in your own handwriting, and photographs, the very print of you, which I took along with the marriage lines, to prove my words when I told her that you had been married for over a year, and had lived in my house with your wife all that time!"

"Heaven may forgive you for that great wrong, woman; but I never can! And—the lady believed you?"

"Of course she did! How could she help it, when she saw all the proofs? It almost killed her. Indeed, and I think it *did* quite craze her! But she saw her duty, and she had the courage to do it! She knew as she ought to leave you, before the false marriage could go any further. So she left you. I do really respect her for it!"

"In the name of Heaven, *where* did she go? Tell me that! Tell me where to find her, and I may be able to pardon the great wrong you have done us under some insane error," said the husband of the lost wife, striving to control his indignation.

"Indeed, then," exclaimed Mrs. Brown, defiantly, "I am not asking any pardon at all from you, Mr. Scott. It ain't likely as I'll want pardon from Heaven for doing my duty, much less from *you,* Mr. John Scott. Oh, yes! I know you are called the Duke of Hereward; and no doubt you are the Duke of Hereward; but I knew you as Mr. John Scott, and nobody else; and I knew a deal too much of you as *him.* But as to wanting your pardon—that's a good one!"

"Will you be good enough to tell me where my wife,

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the Duchess of Hereward, has gone?" demanded the duke, putting a strong curb upon his anger.

"*You* know where *she* is well enough. *She* is in the *trap* you set for her!" spitefully answered the woman.

In truth, the duke needed all his powers of self-control to enable him to reply calmly:

"I ask you to tell me where is the Lady of Lone, to whom you went on Tuesday afternoon, with a story which has driven her from her home, and driven her, perhaps, to madness, or to death. I charge you to tell me, where is she?"

"Ah! where is Miss Salome Levison, the heiress of Lone, you ask! Exactly! That is what you would give a great deal to know, wouldn't you! You want to follow and join her, and live with her abroad, because you have got a wife living in England. You're a noble duke, so you are! Well, if *this* is what the nobility are a-coming to, the sooner them Republicans have it all their own way the better, I say!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, throwing herself back in her chair and folding her arms.

Detective Setter here joined the Duke of Hereward, and deferentially drew him away to the other end of the room, and whispered:

"I beg your grace not to remain here, subjected to the insolence of this mad woman, whose every second word is treason or blasphemy, or worse, if anything can be worse. Leave me to deal with her. A very little more, and I shall arrest her on the grave charge of conspiracy."

"No, Setter, do nothing of the sort. Use no violence; utter no threats. *Now,* if ever—here, if anywhere—is a crisis, at which we must be not only 'wise as serpents,'

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but *'harmless* as doves,' if we would gain any information from this woman," answered Salome's husband, as he walked back and rejoined Mrs. Brown.

"Will you tell me, *on any terms,* where the Lady of Lone is to be found?" he inquired.

"Humph! I like that! Aren't you a sharp? You *can't* call her the duchess, and you *won't* call her Miss Levison, so you call her the Lady of Lone, anyway!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, with a chuckling laugh.

"But, will you, *for any price,* tell me where she has gone?" repeated the duke.

"As to where Miss Salome Levison has gone, I would not tell you to save your life, even if I could. I could not tell you, even if I would. I left her sitting in her bed-chamber at Elmthorpe House, on that Tuesday afternoon after her false marriage. She was sitting clothed in her deep mourning traveling suit, as she had put on again for her father directly the wedding breakfast was over. She looked the very image of sorrow and despair. She did not tell me where she was going. I don't believe she even knew herself. There, that's all that I have got to tell you, even if you had the power to put me on the rack, as you used to have in the bad old times!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, once more folding her arms and settling herself in her chair.

The Duke of Hereward walked toward the detective officer.

"There is nothing more to be learned from the woman at present, Setter. We have already gained much, however, in the knowledge of the base calumny that drove the duchess from her home. It is a relief to be assured that she has not fallen among London thieves. She has probably gone abroad. You must inquire, discreetly, at

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the London Bridge Railway Stations, for a young lady, in deep mourning, traveling alone, who bought a first-class ticket, on Tuesday evening. There, Setter! There is a mere outline of instructions. You will fill it up as your discretion and experience may suggest," concluded the duke, as he drew on his gloves.

"I would suggest, your grace, that we go to St. Margaret's Old Church, where this strange marriage, in which they try to compromise you, is said to have taken place, and which is close by," said the detective.

"By all means, let us go there and look at the register," assented the duke.

They took leave of Mrs. Brown, and left the house.

Five minutes' drive took them to Old St. Margaret's.

They were fortunate as to the time. The daily morning service was just over, and the curate who had officiated was still in the chancel.

The Duke of Hereward went in, and requested the young clergyman to favor him with a sight of the parish register.

The curate complied by inviting the two visitors to walk into the vestry.

He then placed two chairs at the green table, requested them to be seated, and laid before them the brass-bound volume recording the births, marriages and deaths of this populous, old parish.

The Duke of Hereward turned over the ponderous leaves until he came to the page he sought.

And there he found, duly registered, signed and witnessed, the marriage, by special license, of Archibald-Alexander-John Scott and Rose Cameron, both of Lone, Scotland.

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"The mystery deepens," said the duke, as he pointed to the register.

"It is incomprehensible," answered the detective.

"That is my name," added the duke.

"Some impostor must have assumed it," suggested the officer.

"Then the impostor, in taking my name, must have also taken my face and form, voice and manner, for though, upon my soul, I never married Rose Cameron, there are two honest women who are ready to swear that I did!" whispered the duke, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes; for there were moments when the absurdity of the situation overcame its gravity.

The duke then thanked the curate for his courtesy and left the church, attended by the detective.

"Where shall I tell the cabman to drive?" inquired Setter, as he held the door open after his employer had entered the cab.

"To Elmthorpe House, Kensington. And then, get in here, with me, if you please, Mr. Setter. I have something to say to you," answered his grace.

The detective gave the order and entered the cab.

The duke then made many suggestions, drawn from his own intimate knowledge of the tastes and habits of the duchess, to assist the detective in his search.

"You may safely leave the whole affair in my hands, sir. I will act with so much discretion that no one in London shall suspect that the Duchess of Hereward is missing. For the rest, I have no doubt that we shall soon find out the retreat of her grace. A young lady, dressed in elegant deep mourning, and traveling unattended, would be sure to have attracted attention and

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aroused curiosity, even in the confusion of a crowded railway station. We are safe to trace her, your grace," said Detective Setter, confidently.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE CONVENT

SALOME was tenderly nursed by the nuns during the nine days in which her fever raged with unabated violence.

At the end of that time, having spent all its force, the fever went off, leaving her weak as a child, in mind as well as in body.

As soon as she was convalescent the abbess had her carefully removed from the infirmary in which she had lain ill, to a spacious chamber, with windows overlooking the convent garden—a gloomy outlook now, however, with its seared grass and withered foliage, shivering under the dreary November sky.

The room was very clean and very scantily furnished; the walls were whitewashed and the floor was painted gray. The two windows were shaded with plain white linen; the cot bedstead, which stood against the wall opposite the windows, was covered with a coarse, white, dimity spread.

Between the windows stood a small table, covered with a white cloth, and furnished with a white, earthenware basin and ewer. On each side of this table sat two wooden chairs, painted gray.

In one corner of the room stood a little altar, draped

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with white linen, and adorned with a crucifix, surrounded with small pictures of saints and angels.

In the opposite corner stood a small, porcelain stove, which barely served to temper the coldness of the air.

There were few articles of comfort, and none of luxury, in the room—a strip of gray carpet, laid down beside the bed, an easy-chair with soft, padded back, arms, and seat, covered with white dimity, drawn up to the window nearest the stove, and a footstool of gray tapestry on the floor before it. These comforts were allowed to none but invalids.

The abbess came in to see her every day.

One morning Salome said to her visitor:

"Mother, I have left this affair with the Duke of Hereward incomplete. I must complete it, that I may have peace."

"I do not understand you, my child," said the abbess, in some uneasiness.

"I have left him as in duty bound. I must write to him to let him know *why* I left him; but I must not let him know the place of my retreat. I think I heard you say that our father-director was going to Rome this week?"

"Yes, my child."

"Then I will write to the Duke of Hereward for the last time, and bid him an eternal farewell. I will not date my letter from any place; but I will give it to the father-director that he may post it from Rome. You shall read my letter before I close it, dear mother. And now, on these terms, will you let me have writing materials?"

"Certainly, my child. I will send them to you; or

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rather, I will bring them," answered the meek lady-superior, as she arose and left the room.

In a very few minutes she returned with the required articles.

Salome wrote her letter, and then submitted it to the perusal of the abbess, who accorded it her full approval.

"Now, dear mother, if the father-director will take that with him and post it from Rome, all will be over between the Duke of Hereward and myself! We shall be dead to each other," said Salome, as the abbess took the letter and left the room.

Then the invalid sank back, exhausted, in her easy-chair.

In this easy-chair by the window, with her feet upon the footstool, Salome sat day after day of her convalescence; sometimes for hours together, with her hands clasped upon her lap, and her eyes fixed upon the floor, in a sort of stupor; sometimes with her sad gaze turned upon the sear garden, as she murmured to herself:

"Withered like my life!"

Some one among the nuns was always with her; but she took no notice of her companion, seeming quite unconscious of the sister's presence.

The abbess had taken care to have books of devotion laid upon her little table, but Salome never opened one of them.

Apathy, lethargy, like a moral death, had fallen upon her.

The story of her sorrows, known only to the abbess, to whom she had confided it on the eve of her illness, was never alluded to.

Salome seemed to have buried it in silence. The abbess feared to raise it from the dead.

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Not one in the convent suspected the real circumstances of the case.

All the sisterhood knew Miss Salome Levison, the young English heiress, who had been educated within their walls; all knew that in leaving the convent, three years before, she had declared her intention to return at the end of three years and take the veil. She had returned, according to her word, and no one was surprised. Her sickness they considered purely accidental. They had no knowledge of her marriage. She was to them still Miss Salome Levison, who had once been their pupil, and was now soon to be their sister.

No newspapers were taken in at the convent, or the nuns might have seen repeated notices of her approaching marriage before it took place, as well as a long account of the ceremony and the breakfast, after they had come off.

The abbess tried many gentle expedients to arouse Salome from her moral torpor, but all her efforts were fruitless.

Salome had once been an enthusiast in music, and a very accomplished performer on several instruments. Her favorite had always been the harp, and next to that the guitar.

She was not yet strong enough to play on the former, but she might very well manage the latter.

So the abbess caused a light and elegant little guitar to be placed in her room.

Salome never even noticed it; but sat with her eyes fixed on her clasped hands that lay on her lap.

So November and a good part of December passed, with very little change.

The abbess, whose rule was absolute in her own house,

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had most solemnly warned the whole sisterhood that they were not to speak of "Miss Levison's" presence in the convent to any visitor, or pupil, or any other person whatever, or to write of it to any correspondent. The nuns had obeyed their abbess so well, that not a whisper of Salome's presence in the house had been heard outside its walls.

At length Christmas drew near.

The academy was closed for the season, and the pupils all went home to spend their holidays.

After the departure of their young charges, the sisterhood were very busy in making preparations to celebrate the joyous anniversary of our Lord's birth.

There were so many delightful little duties to be done; the chapel to be decorated with evergreens and exotics; the shrines of the saints to be decked; extra dainties to be made for the sick in the Infirmary; presents to be got up for the aged men and women of the "Home" attached to the convent; entertaining books to be selected and inscribed with the names of the boys and girls of their Orphan Asylum; doll-babies to be dressed and toys to be chosen for the infants of their Foundling; and, finally, a great Christmas tree to be mounted and decorated for the delight of the whole community within their walls.

The sisterhood took so much pleasure in all these preparations for Christmas, that it occurred to the abbess she might be able so far to interest her unhappy guest in the work as to arouse her from that fearful lethargy which seemed to be destroying both her mind and body.

Salome Levison, while she had been a pupil in the convent, had never performed any services for the chari-

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ties of the community except by giving liberally from her ample means.

Gladly would she have ministered in person to the needs of old age, illness, or infancy; but for her to have done so would have been against the rules of the establishment. The pupils of the academy were not permitted to hold any intercourse whatever with the inmates of the charitable institutions of the convent. This was a concession to the prudence of parents, who feared all manner of contaminations from any communication between their children and such *miserables.*

The convent was so planned as to effect a complete separation between the academy and the asylums.

The buildings were erected around a hollow square. They measured a hundred feet on each side, and arose to a height of four stories.

In the centre of the front, or northern face, stood the chapel, a beautiful little Gothic temple, surmounted by a steeple and a gilded cross; on each hand, in a line with the chapel, stood the buildings containing the cloisters, dormitories, and refectories of the nuns and novices.

On the east front stood the Foundling for abandoned infants; the Asylum for orphan boys and girls, and the Home for aged men and women.

On the south end were the offices, kitchens, laundries, storehouses, gasehouse, etc., for the whole establishment.

Finally, on the west front, farthest removed from the asylums, were the academy buildings, containing school and classrooms, dormitories and refectory for the accommodation of pupils.

It was in these west buildings that Salome had lived and learned during the years she had spent at the Con-

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vent of St. Rosalie. She had never entered any other part of the establishment except the chapel, and on the north front, which was reached by a long passage running with an angle from the school-hall to the chapel aisle.

The square courtyard within the enclosure of these buildings was paved with gray flag-stones, and adorned in the centre by a marble fountain. But no footstep ever crossed it except that of some lay sister occasionally sent from the cloisters to the office, on some household errand. So no opportunity was afforded of making the courtyard a place of meeting between the "young ladies" of the academy and the poor little children of the asylums.

The academy opened from its front upon its own gardens, lawns, shrubberies, and other pleasure-grounds, the resort of its pupils during their hours of recreation.

Thus Salome Levison, with all her schoolmates, had been completely cut off from all intercourse with the objects of the convent's charity during the whole period of her residence at the academy, which, indeed, covered the greater portion of her young life.

Now, however, since her return to the convent, she had been domiciliated in the nun's house on the right of the chapel, and possessed, if she pleased to exercise it, the freedom of the establishment.

On the Saturday before Christmas (which would also come on Saturday that year) the abbess went into the room occupied by her invalid guest.

Salome was seated in the white easy-chair beside the window, and near the porcelain stove. She was dressed in a deep mourning wrapper of black bombazine, and an inside handkerchief and undersleeves of white linen.

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Her pallid face and plain hair, and the severe, funereal black and white of her surroundings, made a very ghastly picture altogether.

The Sister Francoise sat there in attendance on her.

The mother-superior dismissed the nun, took the vacated seat, and looked in the face of her guest.

Salome seemed utterly unconscious of the superior's presence. She sat with her hands clasped upon her lap and her eyes fixed upon the floor.

"Salome, my daughter, how is it with you?" softly inquired the abbess, taking one of the limp, thin hands within her own, and tenderly pressing it.

" 'I am the queen of sorrow, crowned and frozen on my deserted throne,' " murmured the girl, in a trance-like abstraction.

"Salome, my child!" said the mother-superior, gazing anxiously into her stony face, whose eyes had never moved from their fixed stare; "Salome, my dear daughter, look at me."

" 'I am the star of sorrow, pale and lonely in the wintry sky.' "

"My poor girl, what do you mean?"

"I read that somewhere, long ago—oh, so long ago, when I was a happy child, and yet I wept then for that solitary mourner as I am not able to weep now for myself, though it suits me just as much," murmured Salome, in the same trance-like manner, still staring on the floor, as she continued:

"Yes, just as much, just as much, for—

"Never was lament begun
By any mourner under sun
That e'en it ended fit but one!"

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"Salome, look at me, speak to me, my dear daughter," said the abbess, tenderly pressing her hand, and seeking to catch her fixed and staring eyes.

Salome slowly raised those woeful eyes to the lady's face, and asked:

"Mother, good mother, did you ever know any one in all your life so heavily stricken as I am?"

The abbess put her arms around the young girl and drew her head down upon her own pitying bosom, as she replied:

"Have I ever known one so heavily stricken as you? My child, I cannot tell. 'The heart knoweth its *own* bitterness,' and one cannot weigh the grief of another. Salome, you have been heavily smitten; but so have many others. Daughter! I never do speak of my own sorrows. They are past, and 'they come not back again.' But I think it might do you good to hear of them now. Child! like you, I never knew a mother's love; but there were three beings in the world whom I loved, as *you* love, with inordinate and idolatrous affection. They were my noble father, my only brother, and my affianced husband. Salome, in the Revolution of '48, my father was assassinated in the streets of Paris, as yours was in his chamber at Lone. My brother, true as steel to his sovereign, was guillotined as a traitor to the Republican party. Last, and hardest to bear, my affianced lover—he on whom my soul was stayed in all my troubles, as if any one weak mortal could be a lasting stay to another in her utmost need—my affianced lover, false to me as yours to you, was shot and killed in a duel by the lover, or husband, of a woman, for whom he had left his promised bride! Daughter, did I ever know any one who

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was so heavily stricken as yourself?" gravely inquired the abbess, laying her hand upon the bowed head of her guest.

"Oh, yes, good mother, you have," murmured the weeping girl, in a voice full of tears. "Your fate has been very like my own—you, like me, were motherless from your infancy; you, like me, spent your childhood and youth in this very convent school. Your father, like mine, met his death at the hands of an assassin; your lover, false as mine, abandoned you for a guilty love. Ah! your sorrows have been very like mine, and much heavier and harder to bear." And Salome drew the caressing hands of the abbess to her lips and kissed them over and over again, as she repeated, "Oh, yes, good mother, much heavier and harder to bear than mine."

"I do not know that, my daughter; but I do know, if I had set myself down a grieving egotist, to brood over my own individual troubles, in a world full of troubles, needing ministrations, I should have lost my reason, if not my soul."

"But you came back to your convent, as I have come, for refuge," said Salome.

"Yes, I came here to give my life to the Lord; not in idle, selfish prayers and meditations for my own soul's sake; no, but in an active, useful life of work. And I have found deep peace, deep joy. So will you, my beloved child, if you take the same way. But you must begin by shutting the doors of your soul against the thoughts of your sorrow, and especially by banishing the image of your false and guilty lover every time it presents itself to your mind."

"Oh, mother! mother! I loved him so! I loved him so!" cried Salome, bursting into a paroxysm of sobs and

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tears, the first tears she had been able to shed over her awful sorrows.

The abbess was glad to see them; they broke up the fatal apathy as a storm disperses malaria. She gathered the weeping girl to her bosom, and let her sob and cry there to her heart's content.

When the gust of grief had spent itself, Salome lifted her head and dried her eyes, murmuring:

"Yes, I loved him! I loved him! but it is past! it is past! I must forget him, henceforth and forever!"

"Yes, daughter, you must forget him, for to remember him would be a grievous sin. And you must forgive him, though he meditated against you the deepest wrong," said the abbess, solemnly.

"I will try to forgive the wrong-doer and forget the wrong, but oh! mother, mother, it will be very hard to overlive it! Oh, I hope, I hope, if it be Heaven's will, that I shall not have to live very long," said Salome, with a heavy sigh.

"That is the way I felt in the first bitterness of my sorrow; but the feeling passed away in duty-doing. And now, although I know that in the next life every need and aspiration of the soul will be fulfilled, yet I find such peace and joy here, that I am willing, yes and glad, to live in this world as long as my Lord has any work for me to do in his vineyard."

"Tell me what I ought to do, and I will try to do it," said Salome, with another deep sigh; for her very breathing was sighing now.

"You know that this is Saturday, the last Saturday before Christmas," said the abbess.

"Is it? I did not know, I have taken no note of time."

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"And to-morrow is Sunday, the last Sunday before Christmas."

"Yes, of course."

"Daughter, you have not been to chapel once since your arrival among us."

"Ah, no! I came from the infirmary here, and I have not left this room to go anywhere since!" sighed Salome.

"That is not because you are not able to do so, but because you are not willing. You have allowed yourself to sink into a sinful and dangerous lethargy of mind and body, in which you have brooded morbidly over your afflictions. You must do so no longer. You must rouse yourself from this moment. You must go with us to-night to vespers. To-morrow morning you will attend high mass. A fellow-countryman of yours, Father F——, an Oratorian priest from Norwood, England, will preach. He will do you good. Since the days of St. John, the beloved disciple, no wiser, more loving, or more eloquent soul ever spoke to sinners," said the abbess.

"But—coming from England!—If he should recognize me!" exclaimed Salome.

"Why, do you know him?"

"Oh, no, not at all; but then there are sometimes people with whom we have no sort of acquaintance, who yet know us by sight from seeing us in public places, or meeting us on public occasions.

"That is very true, my child; but you need have no fear of being recognized by the officiating priest to-morrow, whoever he may be, for you will sit with us behind the screen."

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"Thanks, dear mother; I will go with you this very evening."

"You are a good and obedient child. Receive my benediction," said the mother-superior, rising.

Salome bent her head, and the abbess solemnly blessed her, and then withdrew from the room.

CHAPTER V

THE SOUL'S STRUGGLE

THAT same evening, while the vesper bells were ringing, Salome dressed herself, and, leaning on the arm of the mother-superior, headed the procession of the sisterhood as they marched to the chapel and took their seats in the recess behind the screen, which was so cunningly devised, that, while it afforded the nuns a full view of the altar, the priests, the interior of the pews and the whole congregation, it effectually concealed the forms and faces of the sisterhood seated within it.

Father Francois, the confessor of the convent, officiated at the altar.

A rustic congregation of the faithful filled the pews in the body of the church. They came from farmhouses and villages in the immediate neighborhood of the convent.

The vesper hymn was raised by the nuns.

Salome joined in singing it. She had a rich, sweet, clear soprano voice.

Many were the heads in the rustic assemblage that turned to listen to the new singer in the nuns' choir.

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Salome saw them, and shrank back as if she herself could have been seen, though she was quite invisible to them, for the screen, which was transparent to her eyes, was impenetrable to theirs. She remembered this, at length, and recovered her composure.

The sweet vesper service soothed her soul, and when it was over, and the benediction was given, the "peace that passeth all understanding" descended upon her troubled spirit.

She left the chapel, leaning on the mother-superior's arm.

When she reached her room door she kissed the lady's hand in bidding her good-night.

"This has done you good, my daughter," said the abbess, gently.

"It has done me good. Thanks for your wise counsel, holy mother. I will follow it still. I will go again to-morrow. Bless me, my mother," said Salome, bowing her head before the abbess, who blessed her again, and then softly withdrew.

Salome entered her room and retired to rest, and slept more calmly than she had done for many days and nights.

She arose on Sunday morning refreshed; but it seemed as if her stony apathy had passed off, only to leave her more keenly sensitive to her cause of grief; for as she dressed herself, a flood of tender memories overflowed her soul, and she threw herself, weeping freely, on her cot.

In this condition she was found by the abbess, who was pleased to see her weep, knowing that the keenness of sorrow is much softened by tears.

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She sat down in silence by the cot, and waited until the paroxysm was past.

"Good mother, I could not help it," said Salome, with a last convulsive sob, as she wiped her eyes and arose.

"Nor did I wish you to do so. Thank the Lord for the gift of tears. Have you had breakfast, my daughter?"

"Yes, dear mother. Sister Francoise brought it to me before I was up. This is the last time I will allow myself such an indulgence. To-morrow morning, if you will permit me, I will join you in the refectory."

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so, my child. Your recovery depends much upon yourself. Every exertion that you make helps it forward. And now I came to tell you that in ten minutes we shall go on to the chapel. Will you be ready to accompany us?"

"Yes, dear mother, I will come on and join you almost immediately," said Salome, standing up and shaking down her black robe into shape.

The abbess softly slipped out of the room and left the guest to complete her toilet.

In a few minutes Salome passed out and joined the procession of nuns to the chapel.

As soon as they were seated in the screened choir, Salome looked through the screen to see if the English priest was at the altar. He was not there yet; but the body of the little chapel was filled with an expectant crowd of small country gentry, farmers and laborers with their families, all drawn together by the fame of the great Oratorian.

Presently the procession entered—six boys, in white surplices, preceding a pale, thin, intellectual-looking young man in priestly robes.

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The priest took his place before the altar, the boys kneeling on his right and left, and the solemn celebration of the high mass was begun.

The nuns sang well within their screened choir; but the new soprano voice that sang the solos, and rose elastic, sweet and clear, soaring to the heavens in the *Gloria in Excelsis,* seemed to carry all the worshipers with it.

"Who is she?" inquired one of another, in hushed whispers, when the divine anthem had sunk into silence.

"Who is she?"

No one in the congregation could tell; but many surmised that she must be some young postulant of St. Rosalie, just beginning, or about to begin, her novitiate.

At length the pale priest passed into the pulpit, and, amid a breathless silence of expectancy, gave out his text:

"GOD IS LOVE."

A truth revealed to us by the Divine Saviour, and confirmed to our hearts by the teachings of His Holy Spirit.

The preacher spoke of the divine love, "never enough believed, or known, or asked," yet the source of all our life, light and joy; he spoke of human love, a derivative from the divine, in all its manifestations of family affection, social friendship, charity to the needy, forgiveness of enemies.

And while he spoke of love, "the greatest good in the world," his tones were full, sweet, deep and tender, his pale face radiant, his manner affectionate, persuasive, winning.

He was listened to with rapt attention, and even when he had brought his sermon to a close, and his eloquent

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voice had ceased, his hearers still, for a few moments, sat motionless under the spell he had wrought upon them.

As soon as the benediction had been pronounced, the abbess arose from her seat in the choir, drew the arm of her still feeble guest within her own, and, followed by her nuns, walking slowly in pairs, left the choir.

She took Salome to the door of her room in perfect silence, and would have left her there but that the girl stopped her by saying:

"Holy mother, I wish to speak to you, if you can give me a few minutes, before we go to the refectory."

"Surely, my daughter," answered the abbess, kindly, as she followed her guest into the chamber.

"Sit down in the easy chair, good mother," said Salome, drawing the soft, white-cushioned seat toward her.

"No, sit you there, poor child," answered the abbess, taking her guest kindly and seating her in the easy chair. "I shall be well enough here," she added, as she sat down on one of the painted, wooden seats. "Now, tell me what you wish to say, daughter," she concluded.

"Dear mother, I have been very deeply interested in Father F. this morning."

"You should be interested in the message only, not in the messenger, my child," gravely replied the elder lady.

"In the message alone I believe I was most concerned; but the message was most eloquently delivered by the messenger," said Salome, as her pale cheeks flushed.

"Well, my daughter, go on in what you were about to say."

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"Holy mother, that message, so earnestly spoken, has moved me to greater diligence in what I have purposed to do. You know that I have intended to take the veil in this convent, and devote my life and my fortune to good works."

"Yes, my child, I know that such has been your pious purpose. What then?"

"I wish to use all diligence in carrying out that purpose. I wish to enter upon my novitiate immediately."

"My good daughter, far be it from me to throw any stumbling-block in the way of such praiseworthy intentions; but the strict rules of our order require that a postulant should remain in the convent twelve calendar months, to test her vocation, before she is suffered to bind herself by any vows," said the abbess, very gravely.

"As if *my* vocation had not been sufficiently tested," sighed Salome.

"It may have been so, my daughter. This probation may not be necessary in your case, yet we can make no exception to our rules even in your favor. You will, therefore, if you wish, remain with us for one year, unfettered by any vows. At the end of this year of probation, if you shall still desire to do so, you may be permitted to take the white veil and commence your novitiate. In the meantime you need not, and ought not, to be idle. You may be as zealous and diligent in good works while a postulant as you possibly could be as a white-veiled novice or a black-veiled nun."

"Show me how I may be so, holy mother, and I will bless you," exclaimed Salome.

"I will very gladly be your guide, my child. Listen, Salome. Hitherto, you have been very charitable in giving alms. You have given liberally of your means;

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but you have never yet given your personal services to the poor and needy. That was not our Lord's way, whose servants we are. He gave alms, indeed, and He performed miracles to supply them, as in the case of the loaves and fishes; but most of all, better than all, He gave His personal ministrations; He taught the ignorant; He anointed the eyes of the blind; *He laid His hands on the leper;* He shrank from no personal contact with disease, however loathsome; distress, however ignominious; nor must we, His children, do so. We must give our personal services to the poor."

"Tell me what to do, and how to do it, good mother, and I will gladly obey your instructions. Tell me, for I am so very ignorant."

"To-morrow, the Monday before Christmas, you may go with me the rounds of our asylums and schools, and see for yourself destitute old age, destitute childhood and abandoned infancy; and you may choose your work among these poor, needy, helpless ones," said the abbess, gravely.

"And are laborers wanted in that vineyard, mother?"

"Always."

"Then here am I, for one, poor one. I am longing to go to work."

"At first your work shall be a very bright and pleasant labor, dear child. This is the joyous week of preparation for the glad, Christmas festival. This week we are all, young and old, engaged in the delightful recreations of charity. Our Lord Himself, who, in His Divine benignity, blessed the marriage feast of Cana with a miracle, smiles on our recreations of charity, which, with us just now, consist in the preparation of Christmas gifts to gladden the hearts of our poor these Christ-

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mas times. To-morrow, if you please, I will take you to our work rooms, where you may choose your own task."

"Oh, how willingly I will do that!" said Salome, earnestly.

A bell had been ringing for a few moments; and so the abbess arose and said:

"That is the dinner bell. You promised to join us in the refectory, and I think it is best you should do so, my daughter."

"I will follow your counsels in everything, holy mother," answered Salome sweetly, as she arose and put her hand on the offered arm of her friend.

The abbess led her protégé down a long passage and deep flights of stairs to the refectory, where, at each side of a very long table, running down the length of the room, stood about fifty nuns waiting for their mother-superior.

The abbess gave her guest a seat next to her own, then crossed herself and sat down.

The nuns all made the sign of the cross upon their breasts and seated themselves at the table.

This was the first occasion upon which Salome sat down at the nuns' table; but it was not the last, for from this day she regularly appeared there, and, though she was given to frequent and violent fits of weeping, her health and spirits steadily improved under the regimen of the abbess.

On Monday morning the lady-superior took Salome through all the asylums on the east side of the convent.

They went first into the aged men's home, where, in a large, clean, well-warmed and well-lighted hall, furnished with arm-chairs, tables and many plain and

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cheap conveniences, were gathered about thirty gray-haired or baldheaded patriarchs, whose ages ranged from seventy to a hundred years. Yet not one of them was idle. They were all engaged in plaiting chip-mats, baskets, hampers and other useful articles that could be made out of reeds or cane. The oldest man among them, a centenarian, was employed in plaiting straw for hats.

"They look very happy and busy," said Salome, after she had responded to their respectful nods and smiles of welcome.

"Yes, and they nearly half pay expenses by their handicrafts. Even they, aged and infirm as they are, can half support themselves if they have only shelter, protection and guidance."

"And there seems to be no sick among them," said Salome.

"Ah, yes," answered the abbess, gravely, "there are five in the infirmary connected with this home; but we will not go there now. Let us pass on to the aged women's home."

They entered the next house, where, in a large, warm, light room, plainly furnished, about twenty old women, from sixty to ninety years of age, were collected. They were neatly dressed in gray stuff gowns, white aprons, white kerchiefs, and white Normandy caps. And all were busy—some knitting, some sewing, some tatting.

They bowed and smiled a welcome to the visitor, who responded in the same manner.

"These, also, half support themselves by their work," said the abbess; "but the proportion of sick among them is greater than among the men. There are ten in the infirmary."

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They went next to the orphan boys' asylum, where fifty male children of ages from three to twelve years were lodged, fed, clothed and educated.

"What becomes of these when they leave here?" inquired Salome.

"We send them out as apprentices to learn trades; and we find homes for them," answered the abbess.

"Can you always find good homes and masters for them?"

"Yes, always. We do it through the secular clergy. Now let us go into the girls' asylum," said the abbess, leading the way to the next institution.

The orphan girls' asylum was, in many respects, similar to the boys' home.

"Do you wish to know what becomes of these, when they leave here?" inquired the abbess, anticipating the question of her companion. "I will tell you. The greater number of them are sent out to service as cooks, chambermaids, seamstresses, or nursery governesses. Some few, who show unusual intelligence, are educated for teachers. If any one among their number evinces talent for any particular art, she is trained in that art. My child, we have sent out more than one artist from our orphan girls' asylum," said the abbess.

"How much good you do!" exclaimed Salome.

"Let us go into the Foundling," said the mother-superior, leading the way to the last house of the eastern row of buildings.

Ah! here was a sight sorrowful enough to make the "angels weep!"

The abbess led her companion into a long room, clean, warm, light and airy, with about thirty narrow little cots, arranged in two rows against the walls, fifteen on

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each side, with a long passage between them. About half a dozen of these cots were empty. On the others lay about twenty-four of the most pitiable of all our Lord's poor—young infants abandoned by their unnatural parents. All these were under twelve months old, and were pale, thin and famished-looking. Some were sleeping, and seemingly, ah! so aged and careworn in their sleep; some were clasping nursery-bottles in their skeleton hands, and sucking away for dear life; one little miserable was wailing in restless pain, and sending its anguished eyes around in appealing looks for relief.

Four women of the sisterhood were on duty here, and each one sat with a pining infant on her lap, while there was no one to attend to the wants of that wailing little sufferer on the bed.

"Oh, merciful Father in Heaven! what a sight!" cried Salome, overcome with compassionate sorrow.

"Yes, it is piteous! most piteous!" said the mother-superior, in a mournful tone. "We do the very best we can for these poor, deserted babes; but young infants, bereft of their mother's milk, which is their life, and of their mother's tender love and intuitive care, suffer more than any of us can estimate, and are almost sure to perish, out of *this* life, at least. With all our care and pains, more than two-thirds of them die."

"Is there no help for this?" sadly inquired the visitor.

"No help within ourselves. But the peasant women in our neighborhood have Christian spirits and tender hearts. When any one among them loses her sucking child, she comes to us and asks for one of our motherless babes. We select the most needing of them and give it to her, and the nurse child has then a chance for

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its life; but even then, if it lives, it is because some other child has died and made room for it."

"Oh, it is piteous! it is piteous, beyond all words to express! Destitute childhood, destitute old age, are both sorrowful enough, Heaven knows! But they have power to make their sufferings known, and to ask for help! *But destitute infancy!* Oh, look here! look here! Can anything on earth be so pathetic as this?"

"They are so innocent; they have not brought their evils on themselves. They are so helpless! They have not even words to tell their pain, or ask for relief! Mother! You said that I might choose my work! I have chosen it. It is here. And I begin it from this moment," said Salome.

And she threw off her hat and cloak, and drew her gloves and cast them all on a chair, and went and took up the wailing infant from the cot.

The abbess sat down and watched her.

She soothed the baby's plaints upon her bosom as she walked it up and down the floor, singing a sweet nursery song in a low and tender voice, until it fell asleep. Then she came and laid it, sleeping, on its cot.

"My dear daughter," said the abbess, gravely, "before you select this field of duty, I must warn you that it is, and it *must needs* be, of all charitable administrations, the most laborious and trying."

"It may be so; but it is also the most divine," said Salome, with a grave, sweet smile. "Listen, dear mother. I know not how it is, but—with all its pathos—the sphere of this room is heavenly. And while I held that baby to my bosom and soothed it to sleep, its little, soft form seemed to draw all the fever and soreness from my own aching heart as well. Here is my earthly work,

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dear mother! Nay, rather, here is my heavenly mission and consolation. Leave me here."

The mother-superior took the votaress at her word, and left her then and there.

In the course of the same day a small closet, communicating with the infants' dormitory, was fitted up as a sleeping berth for Salome, and her few personal effects were conveyed from the convent and arranged within her new dwelling.

Salome had not mistaken her vocation. To serve these forsaken and suffering children was to her a labor of love; to relieve them, a work of joy.

She never left her charge, except to go to chapel, or to her meals, which she took at the nuns' table, in their refectory.

On Christmas Eve, as she returned from dinner, Sister Francoise invited her to look into the workroom and see the Christmas presents in process of preparation.

To please the kind sister, she followed her into a long hall, furnished with little tables, at each of which sat two or three of the nuns at work.

As Salome, with her conductor, walked down the room, she saw that on one table was a pile of children's illustrated books of great variety to suit little ones, from three years old to thirteen. The two nuns seated at the table were busy writing in the books the names of those for whom they were intended.

Another table was piled with woolen scarfs, socks, gloves and nightcaps for the aged men and women, which the two nuns seated there were employed in rolling up into separate little parcels, and labeling with the names of the intended recipients.

Still another, and a longer table, was bright and gay

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with party-colored scraps of silk, satin, velvet, ribbon, muslin, lace and linen, with which half a dozen young nuns seated there were cheerfully engaged in making dresses for a basketful of dolls, for the Christmas gifts to the infants.

The blooming young nun Felicitie presided at this table. Seeing Salome approach with Sister Francoise, she accosted her:

"Our holy mother told us that you would come in and help us dress these dolls."

"And so I would have done, only I found some living and suffering dolls to dress and feed," said Salome, smiling.

"Yes, I know, the babies of the Foundling. Well, we are dressing these dolls for your babies," said the smiling sister.

"But do you suppose my tiny little ones will care for dolls?" inquired Salome.

"Be sure they will; from six months old up, boys or girls, sick or well, babies will love dolls. I have seen a sick baby hug her doll, just as I have seen a sick mother clasp her child," answered the sister.

"These are the recreations of charity the holy mother told me of," said Salome, as she passed out of the work-room and went back to her own sphere of duty.

On Christmas morning after matins, the Christmas gifts were distributed in every one of the asylums, and every inmate was made happy by an appropriate present.

At ten o'clock high mass was celebrated in the chapel of the convent, and all the sisterhood assembled in their screened choir.

Three priests in their sacerdotal robes, and a dozen

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boys in white surplices, were expected to serve at the altar. The chapel was profusely decorated with holly, and the shrines were dressed with flowers. The pews were filled with a congregation of a rather better social position than usually assembled there in the convent chapel.

The services had not yet commenced. Salome bent forward with all the interest and curiosity of a recluse, to look, for a moment, upon the strangers.

She gave but one glance through the screen, and then suddenly, with a low cry, she sank back upon her seat.

"What is the matter, my daughter? Are you ill?" inquired the mother-superior, in a whisper.

Salome lifted up a face ashen pale with dismay, and gasped:

"I have seen him! I have seen him! He is there—there in the congregation below!"

"Who?" inquired the abbess, in vague alarm.

"My husband?—yet, no; oh, Heaven! not my husband, but the Duke of Hereward!"

CHAPTER VI

THE STRANGER IN THE CHAPEL

"THE Duke of Hereward in the congregation?" echoed the abbess, with a troubled look.

"Yes, there in the middle aisle, in the third pew from the altar," replied Salome, in trembling tones.

"No matter. *You* have nothing to fear, my daughter; you will be protected. *He* has everything to fear; he is

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a felon before the law, and he may be prosecuted. Compose yourself, my child, and give your mind to heavenly subjects. See, the priest is coming in," murmured the abbess, who immediately crossed herself, and lowered her eyes in devotion.

Salome, though trembling in every limb, and feeling faint, almost to falling, followed the mother-superior's example, and tried to concentrate her mind in worship.

The solemn procession of the service entered the chancel—the priests in their sacerdotal vestments, the boys in their white robes. The officiating priest took his station before the altar, with his assistants on each side. And the impressive celebration of the high mass commenced.

But, ah! Salome could not confine her attention to the service! Her eyes, guard them carefully as she might, would wander from her missal toward the stalwart form and stately head of the stranger in that third pew front; her thoughts would wander back to the past, forth to the future, or, if they stayed upon the present at all, it was but in connection with that stranger.

Father F——, the great English priest, preached the sermon, from the text: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." He preached with all the force, fervor and eloquence inspired by the Divine words, and he was heard with rapt attention by all the cloistered nuns and all the common congregation —by all within the sound of his voice, perhaps, except one—the most sorrowful one on that glad day. Salome tried in vain to follow the golden thread of his discourse.

But how little she was able to do, may be known from the deep sigh of relief she heaved when it was all over.

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As soon as the benediction was pronounced, the nuns arose to leave their screened choir, and the congregation got up to go out from the chapel.

Salome lingered behind the sisterhood, and watched the handsome stranger in the third pew front—a stranger to every one present except herself.

He also lingered behind all his companions, and turned and looked intently up into the screened choir.

Salome saw his full face for the first time since his appearance there—and she saw that it was deadly, ghastly pale, with white lips and glassy eyes. He gazed into the screened choir as into vacancy.

Salome knew that he could see nothing there, yet she shrank back and stood in the deepest shadow, until she saw him pick up his hat and glide from the chapel, the last man that went out.

"Ah, what could have changed him so?" she thought; "love, fear, remorse—what?"

He had nothing to fear from her. If no one should take vengeance on him until she should do so, then would he go unpunished to his grave, and his sin would never have found him out in this world. Nay, sooner than to have hurt him in life, liberty, honor, or estate, she, herself, would have borne the penalty of all his crimes. Yet of those crimes what an unspeakable horror she had, though for the criminal what an unutterable pity—what an undying love.

While she stood there, gazing through the choir-screen upon the spot whence the stranger had disappeared, her bosom, torn by these conflicting passions of horror, pity, love, she felt a soft touch on her shoulder, and turning, saw the mother-superior at her side.

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"My daughter, why do you loiter here?" she tenderly inquired.

Salome's pale face flushed, as she replied:

"Oh, mother, I was watching him until he left the church."

"My daughter, it was a deadly sin to do so!" gravely replied the abbess.

"He could not see me, mother," sighed Salome, in a tremulous voice.

"That was well. Come now to your own room, daughter, and do not tremble so. You have nothing to fear, except from your own weak and sinful nature," said the abbess, as she drew the girl's arm within her own and led her from the choir.

"Am I so weak and sinful, mother?" inquired Salome, after a silence which had lasted until the two had reached the door of the Infants' Asylum, where Salome now lodged.

"As every human being is; and especially as every woman is in all affairs of the heart," gravely returned the abbess.

"Can you spare me a few minutes, mother? Will you come in and let me talk to you a little while? Have you time? I want to talk to you. Oh! I wish we had mother-confessors for women—for girls, I mean, instead of father-confessors. Can you come in and let me talk to you, mother, for a little while?"

"Surely, daughter," said the abbess, gently, as with her own hand she opened the door and led her votaress into the room.

Salome offered the one chair to the lady-superior, and then took the footstool at her feet, and laid her head upon her knees.

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"Now, speak to me freely, child. Tell me what you wish and how I can help you," said the abbess, kindly.

"Oh, mother! mother! I wish to be rid of the sin of loving him, for I love him still. In spite of all, I love him still!" exclaimed Salome, breaking down in a passion of tears and sobs.

The abbess laid her hands upon the bowed young head, and kept them so in silence until the storm of grief had passed. Then she said:

"Child, you must fast and pray, and so combat the 'inordinate and sinful affections of the flesh.' Bethink you what you do in suffering them. You make an idol of that monster of iniquity who was an accomplice in the murder of your father——"

Salome uttered a low cry, and hid her face in her hands. The abbess went on steadily, almost pitilessly:

"A man who, having already a living wife, of whom he had grown tired and ashamed, married you, and so would have ruined you in soul and body."

Salome groaned deeply, and then suddenly broke forth in passionate exclamations:

"I know it! I know it! I know it from the evidence of my own senses, no less than from the testimony of others! I *know* it, but I cannot *feel it,* mother! I cannot feel it! My *mind* adjudges him *guilty;* my *mind condemns* him upon unquestionable proof; but my *heart* holds him *guiltless;* in the face of all the proofs, my *heart acquits* him! I *know* him to be a criminal; but I *feel* him to be one of the greatest, best and noblest of mankind! In spite of all I have heard and seen with my own ears and eyes, corroborated by the testimony of others—in spite of everything past, I *feel,* I *feel* that if he should now come and take my hand in his, and whis-

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per to me, I should believe all that he might tell me, and go with him whithersoever he might choose to lead me! Mother, *save me from myself!*"

The abbess laid her hands again upon the throbbing head that lay on her lap, as she answered, mournfully:

"Said I not that you have nothing to fear except from your weak and sinful self. Child, you have nothing else on earth to dread. You are to be protected from yourself alone."

"And from *him!* Oh, mother, keep the great temptation from me!"

"He shall be kept from you, if, indeed, he should presume to seek you here," said the abbess.

"He will seek me, mother! He came to seek me, and for nothing else. He has by some means found out my retreat, and he has come to seek me! Be sure that he will present himself here to-morrow, if not to-day."

"In that case, we shall know how to deal with him, even though he is the Duke of Hereward; for he has, and can have, no lawful claim on you. So far from that, he is in deadly danger from you. He is liable to prosecution by you; for you are not his wife; you are only a lady whom he entrapped by a felonious marriage ceremony, and sought to ruin. It is amazing," added the abbess, reflectively, "that a nobleman of his exalted rank and illustrious fame should have stooped *so* low as to stain his honor with so deep a crime, and to risk the infamy and destruction its discovery must have brought upon him."

"It is amazing and incredible! That is why, in the face of the evidence of my own eyes and ears, the testimony of other eye and ear witnesses, and of my own certain knowledge, based upon proof as sure as ever

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formed the foundation of any knowledge, I still feel in my heart of hearts that he is guiltless, stainless, noble, pure and true as the prince of noblemen should be," sighed Salome, adding word upon word of eulogy, as if she could not say enough.

"In the face of all positive proof, and of the convictions of your judgment, your *heart* tells you that this criminal is innocent," said the abbess, incisively.

"In the face of all, my heart assures me that he is pure, true and noble!" exclaimed Salome.

"Do you believe your heart?" gravely inquired the elder lady.

"No; for is it not written: 'The heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked'? No, I do not believe my weak and sinful heart, which I know would betray me into the hands of my lover, if I should be so unfortunate as to meet him."

"You shall not meet him; you shall be saved from him," answered the abbess.

At that moment a bell was heard to ring throughout the building.

"That calls us to the refectory—to our happy Christmas festival. Come, my daughter," said the lady, rising.

"I cannot go! Oh, indeed I cannot go, mother. I am utterly unnerved by what has happened. I hope you will pardon and excuse me," pleaded Salome.

"What! Will you not join us at our Christmas feast?" kindly persisted the abbess.

"Indeed, it is impossible! I will rest on my cot for a few minutes, and then I will go and take my poor little Marie Perdue on my bosom and rock her to sleep. I

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hear her fretting now; and when I hush her cries, she also soothes my heartache."

"I will send you something; and I will come to you, before vespers," said the abbess, kindly, as she glided away from the room.

Salome lay alone on the cot, with closed eyes and folded hands, praying for light to see her duty and strength to do it.

She expected, in answer to her earnest prayers, that scales should fall from her eyes, and impressions pass from her heart, and that she should see her love in monstrous shape and colors, and be able to thrust him from her heart. Instead of which, she saw him purer, truer, nobler, than ever before. With this perception came a sweet, strange peace and trust which she could not comprehend, and did not wish to cast off.

She arose and went into the infants' dormitory, and took up the youngest and feeblest of the babes—the one which, on her very first visit, had so appealed to her sympathies, and which she had adopted as her own.

This child, like many others in the asylum, had no known story.

A few days before Christmas, late in the evening, a bell had been rung at the main door of the Infants' Asylum.

The portress who answered it found there a basket containing an infant a few weeks old. It was cleanly dressed and warmly wrapped up in flannel; but it had no scrap of writing, no name, nor mark upon its clothing by which it might ever be identified.

The portress took it into the dormitory, where it was tenderly received and cared for by the sisters on duty there.

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The case was too common a one to excite more than a passing interest.

On the next day after the arrival of the infant, it happened that the mother-superior brought Salome there on her first visit, when the misery of the motherless and forsaken infant so moved the sympathies of the young lady that she immediately took it to her own bosom.

Subsequently, since she had devoted herself to the care of these deserted babies, she took an especial interest in this youngest and most helpless of their number.

She named it Marie Perdue, and stood godmother at its baptism.

It lay in her arms often during the day, and slept at her bosom during the night. It had grown to know its nurse, and to recognize her presence and caresses by those soft, low sounds, half cooing and half complaining, with which very young babies first try to utter their emotions or their wants.

Now, as she took little Marie Perdue from the cot, the child greeted her with sweet smiles and soft coos, and nestled lovingly to her bosom. And peace deepened in Salome's heart.

She sat down in a low nursing-chair, fed the child with warm milk and water until it was satisfied, and then rocked it and sang to it in a low, melodious voice, until it fell asleep.

She was still rocking and singing when the rosy-cheeked and cheery young Sister Felicitie came in.

"Our holy mother was going to send your dinner in here, Miss Levison; but I think it must be so dismal to eat one's dinner alone on Christmas day, so I pleaded to be allowed to plead with *you* that you will come and

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dine with us young sisters at the second table, which is just as good as the first, I assure you, only it is served an hour later. Will you come? Say yes!" urged the merry and kind-hearted girl.

"I will come, thank you; though I did too moodily decline the invitation of the abbess," said Salome, rising and placing her sleeping charge upon its little cot.

"Now! what did I tell you about the children and the dolls! Look there!" gleefully exclaimed Sister Felicitie, pointing to a row of cots where about a dozen infants lay asleep, clasping their dolls tightly.

"Yes, the tiny mimic mothers really do love their doll babies," Salome confessed with a smile.

As they went out of the dormitory they passed into the children's day-room, where about twenty infants, from one to two years old, were at play—some sitting on mats or creeping on all fours, because they could not yet stand; some walking around chairs and holding on to support themselves; and some running here and there, in full possession of the use of their limbs.

All rejoiced in the possession of little dolls.

"Look at them!" exclaimed Sister Felicitie, gleefully.

"We tried the least little ones with other toys; but, bless you, nothing else pleases them so well as dolls. We once tried the little yearlings with rattles, which we thought, they being noisy nuisances, would please them better; but save us! If any one doubts the doctrine of original sin and total depravity, they should have seen the three-year-old babies fling down their rattles in a passion and go for the other babies' dolls, to seize and take them by force and violence; and the corresponding rage and resistance of the latter."

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"All that was very natural," said Salome, with a smile.

"Oh, yes, natural, and perhaps something else, too, beginning with a 'd.' They call children 'little angels.' Yes, I know they are, when they are sound asleep," exclaimed the sister, laughing.

"If they are not angels, they have angels with them. I feel they have, for when I am in their sphere, I possess my soul in peace."

As the young lady said this, the children noticed her presence for the first time, and all who could walk ran to her, clustered around her and thrust their dolls upon her, for inspection and approval.

All this Salome bestowed freely with many caresses and gentle, playful words.

Then the children sitting on the mats reached out their dolls at arm's length, and screamed to have them noticed.

Salome made her way to these little sitters, while all the other children, clinging to her skirt, attended her, impeding her progress.

It was a great confusion.

The merry little sister laughed aloud.

"Now!" she said, gayly. "You are in their sphere, do you possess your soul in peace?"

"Something even better. My soul goes out to them, delighting in their innocent delight!" answered Salome.

And after she had patted their heads and praised their dolls, and pleased them all with loving notice, she followed her conductress from the children's playroom through the long rectangular passage that led to the nuns' refectory.

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The sisterhood, abstemious nearly all the days of the year, feasted on certain high holidays.

The Christmas dinner, laid for the young nuns in the refectory, would have satisfied the most fastidious epicure. But I doubt if any epicure could have enjoyed it half as well as did these abstemious young women, whose appetites were only let loose on certain high days and holidays.

Salome wondered at herself, who but two hours before had given way to a storm of passionate sobs and tears, yet now felt a strange peace of mind that enabled her to enter sincerely into the happiness of those around her.

In the afternoon, the convent was visited by a large number of benevolent people in the neighborhood, who brought their Christmas offerings to the poor and needy of the house.

These visitors were shown through all the various departments of charity, and left their offerings in each before they went away.

"I do wish *one* thing," said little sister Felicitie, as she lingered near Salome, after the departure of the visitors.

"What do you wish, dear?" inquired the latter.

"Why, then, that the good people who give to our poor, whatever else they give, would *always* give the children dolls and the old people tobacco. The children *never* can have *too many dolls,* nor the old people *enough* tobacco."

"But is not the use of tobacco a vicious habit?"

"I *hope* not. It makes the poor old souls so happy."

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CHAPTER VII

THE HAUNTER

The vesper bell called them to the chapel, and the conversation ceased.

Salome joined the procession and entered the choir. As soon as she had taken her seat she looked through the screen upon the congregation assembled in the public part of the church. A great dread seized her that she should see again the man whose presence had so disturbed her in the morning.

Heaven! he was there!—not where he sat before, but in one of the end pews, facing the choir, so that she had a full view of his ghastly face and glassy eyes.

A sudden superstitious fear fell upon her. She almost thought the figure was his ghost, or was some optical illusion conjured up by her own imagination.

She wished to test its reality by the eyes of another. She wished to whisper to the abbess, and point him out, and ask her if she, too, saw him; but she dared not do this. The vesper hymn was pealing forth from the choir, and all the sisterhood, except herself, were singing.

She was their soprano, and she had to join them. She began first in a tremulous voice, but soon the spell of the music took hold of her, and carried her away, far, far above all earthly thoughts and cares, and she sang, as her hearers afterward declared, "like a seraph."

At the end of the service she whispered to the abbess, calling her attention to the pallid stranger in the end

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pew; but when both turned to look, the man had vanished!

"Mother, I do not know whether that ghostly figure was a real man, after all!" whispered Salome, in an awe-stricken tone.

"My good child, what do you mean?" inquired the abbess, uneasily.

"Mother, I feel as if I were haunted!" said Salome, with a shudder.

"Come! your nerves have been overtasked. You must have a composing draught, and go to bed," said the superior, decisively.

"It may be that I am nervous and excitable, and that I have conjured up this image in my brain—such a ghastly, ghostly image, mother! It could not have been real, though I thought nothing else this morning than that it was real. But this evening—oh! madam, if you had seen it, with its blanched face and glazed eyes, like a sceptre risen from the grave!"

"I have not seen the man yet, either this morning or this evening," said the elder lady, as she drew the younger's arm within her own.

"No, you have never seen him. I have no one's eyes but my own to test the matter. You have never seen him, and that is another reason why I think of the man as ghostly or unreal," whispered Salome.

They were now in the long passage leading from the chapel to the cells.

"I will take you again to your own little room in the Infants' Asylum," murmured the lady, as she turned with her protégée into the rectangular passage leading to the asylums.

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She took Salome to the door of the house, gave her a benediction, and left her.

"Out there I have trouble, here I shall have peace," muttered the young woman, as she entered the children's dormitory, where every tiny cot was now occupied by a little, sleeping child.

Salome prepared to retire, and in a few moments she also was at rest, with her little Marie Perdue in her arms.

Christmas had come on Saturday that year. The next day being Sunday, there was another high mass to be celebrated in the chapel.

Salome, as usual, joined the nuns' procession to the choir, where the sisterhood, as was their custom, took their seats some few minutes before the entrance of the priest and his attendants.

With a heart almost pausing in its pulsations, Salome bent forward to peer through the screen upon the congregation, to see if by any chance the Duke of Hereward (or his ghost) sat among them.

With a half-suppressed cry, she recognized his form, seated in the opposite corner of the church, from the spot he had last occupied.

"He shifts his place every time he appears," she said to herself.

And now, being determined that other eyes should see him as well as her own, she touched the abbess' arm and whispered:

"Pray look before the priest enters. There is the Duke of Hereward (or his ghost) sitting quite alone in the corner pew, on the left-hand side of the altar. Do you see him now?"

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The abbess followed the direction with her eyes, and answered:

"No, I do not see any one there."

"Why, he is sitting alone in the left-hand corner pew. Surely, you must see him now?" said Salome, bending forward to look again at the stranger.

The next instant she sank back in her seat, nearly fainting.

The pew was empty!

"There is really no one there, my child. Your eyes have deceived you," murmured the abbess, gently.

"He was there but a moment since, but he has vanished! Oh! mother, what is the meaning of this?" gasped the girl, turning pale as death.

"The meaning is that your nervous system is shattered, and you are the victim of optical illusions. Or else—if there was a man really in that pew—he may have passed out through that little corner door leading to the vestry. But hush! here comes the priest," said the abbess, as the procession entered the chancel, preceded by the solemn notes of the organ.

Since "Miss Levison" was obliged to keep her place in the choir, it was well that she was an enthusiast in music, and thus able to lose all sense of care and trouble in the exercise of her divine art.

But for the music she would scarcely have got through the morning service.

And very much relieved she felt when the benediction was at length pronounced, and she was at liberty to leave the chapel.

"Oh, madam, this mystery is killing me! I have seen, or fancied I have seen, the Duke of Hereward in the church three times; yet no one else has been able to

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see him! If it was the duke, he has come here for some fixed purpose. He has, probably, by means of those expert London detectives, traced me out, and discovered my residence under this sacred roof. He has followed me here to give me trouble!" said Salome, as soon as she found herself alone with the superior.

"My child," said the lady, "I must reiterate that *you* have nothing—*he* has everything to fear! I do not know, of course, for even you are not sure that you have really seen him. If you have, he is in this immediate neighborhood. If he is, why, then, the fact must be known to nearly every one outside the convent walls. The Duke of Hereward is not a man whose presence could be ignored. To-morrow, therefore, I will cause inquiries to be made, and we shall be sure to find out whether he is really here or not."

"Thanks, good mother, thanks. It will be a great relief to have this question decided in any way," said Salome, gratefully.

The mother-superior smiled, gave the benediction, and retired.

At vespers that evening, Salome looked all over the church in anxious fear of seeing the form that haunted her imagination; but her "ghost" did not appear, and, after all, she scarcely knew whether she was relieved or disturbed by his absence.

The next day, Monday, the abbess set diligent inquiries on foot to discover whether the Duke of Hereward, or any other stranger of any name or title whatever, had been seen in the neighborhood of St. Rosalie's for many days. Winter was not the season for strangers there.

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After this, the Duke of Hereward (or his ghost) was seen no more in the chapel.

Every time Salome accompanied the sisterhood to the chapel, she peered through the choir-screen, in much anxiety as to whether she should see the duke, or his apparition, among the congregation below; but she never saw him there again, nor could she decide, in the conflict between her love and her sense of duty, whether she most desired or deplored his absence.

So the days passed into weeks, and nothing more was heard or seen of the Duke of Hereward.

The Christmas holidays came to an end after Twelfth Day; the pupils returned to the school, and the academy buildings grew gay with the exuberance of young life.

Salome, who, during many years of her childhood and youth, had shared this bright and cheery school life, now saw nothing of it.

The academy buildings, as has been explained before this, were situated on the opposite side of the court yard from the asylums and entirely cut off from communication with them.

Salome, devoted to her duties in the Infants' Asylum, was more completely secluded from the world than even the cloistered nuns themselves; for the nuns were the teachers of the academy, and in daily communication with their pupils and frequent correspondence with their patrons, saw and heard much of the busy life without.

So the weeks passed slowly into months, and the winter into spring, yet nothing more was seen or heard of the Duke of Hereward.

Salome lost the habit of looking for him, and gradually recovered her tranquillity. In the work to which

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she had consecrated herself—the care of helpless and destitute infancy—she grew almost happy.

Already she seemed as dead to the world as though the "black veil" had fallen like a pall over her head. No newspapers ever drifted into the asylum, nor did any visitor come to bring intelligence of the good or evil of the life beyond the convent walls.

Her year of probation was passing away. At its close she would take the white veil and enter upon the second stage of her chosen vocation—her year of novitiate—at the end of which she would assume the black veil of the cloistered nun, which would seal her fate.

She knew that before taking that final step she must make some disposition of that vast inheritance which, in her flight from her home, she had left without one word of explanation or instruction. She was assured that her fortune was in the hands of honest men, and there she was content to leave it for the present. She had in her possession about a thousand pounds in money and several thousand pounds in diamonds—ample means for self-support and almsgiving.

And so she was satisfied for the present to leave her financial affairs as they were, until the time should come when it would be absolutely necessary for her to give attention to them.

Meanwhile, had she forgotten him who had once been the idol of her worship?

Ah, no! however diligently her eyes, her hands, her feet were employed in the service of the little children she loved so tenderly, her thoughts were with him. She loved him still! It seemed to her at once the sin and the curse of her life that she loved him still. She prayed daily to be delivered from "inordinate and sin-

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ful affections," but in this case prayer seemed of little use; for the more she prayed the more she loved and trusted him. It was a mystery she could not make out.

So the spring bloomed into summer, and the world outside became so disturbed and turbulent with "wars and rumors of wars," that its tumult was heard even within the peaceful convent sanctuary.

The news of the abdication of Her Most Catholic Majesty, Isabella II. of Spain, fell like a thunderbolt upon the little community of the faithful in the convent; and nowhere, in the political conclaves of Prussia or of France, was the Spanish succession discussed with more intensity of interest than among the simple sisterhood of St. Rosalie.

Who would now fill the throne of the Western Cæsars, left vacant by the abdication of their daughter, the Queen Isabella?

These were the topics which filled the minds and employed the tongues of the quiet nuns, whenever and wherever their rules permitted them to indulge in conversation.

No sound of this disturbance, however, penetrated the peaceful sphere of the Infants' Asylum, which, indeed, seemed to be the innermost retreat, or the holy of holies in the sanctuary.

Salome lived within it, the chief ministering angel, dispensing blessings all around her, and growing daily into deeper peace, until one fatal morning, when a great shock fell upon her.

It was a beautiful, bright morning near the end of June, and the day in regular rotation on which the mother-superior of the convent made her official rounds of inspection in the Infants' Asylum.

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She arrived early, and, accompanied by Salome, went over every department of the asylum, from attic to cellar, from dormitory to recreation grounds, and found all well, and approved and delighted in the wellbeing.

After her long walk she sat down to rest in the children's playroom, and directed Salome to take a seat by her side.

The room was full of little children. Not seated in orderly rows, as we have too often seen in Infant Asylums on exhibition days; but moving about everywhere as freely as their little limbs would carry them, and making quite as much noise as their health and wellbeing certainly required.

Among them was little Marie Perdue, now a bright, fair, blue-eyed cherub of seven months old, seated on a mat, and tossing about with screams of delight a number of small, gay-hued India rubber balls.

The abbess was watching the children with pleased attention, when one of the lay sisters entered and put a card in her hands, saying that the gentleman and lady were waiting at the porter's wicket, and desired permission to see the interior of the Infant Asylum.

"Certainly, they are welcome," said the abbess. "Go and tell Sister Francoise to be their guide."

The lay sister left the room, and the abbess gave her attention again to the children, making occasional remarks on their health, beauty, playfulness, and so forth, which were all sympathetically responded to by Salome, until they heard the sounds of approaching voices and footsteps, and the visiting party, escorted by Sister Francoise.

Then the abbess and her companion ceased speaking,

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and lowered their eyes to the floor until the strangers should pass them.

But the strangers lingered on their way, noticing individual children for beauty, or brightness, or some other trait which seemed to attract.

The gentleman, speaking French with an English accent, asked questions in too low a tone to reach the ears of the abbess and her companion; but the lady kept silence.

At length, as the visitors drew nearer, they came upon little Marie Perdue, sitting on her mat, engaged in tossing about her gay-colored balls, and laughing with delight.

"Whose child is that?" asked the gentleman, in a voice that thrilled to the heart of Salome.

She forgot herself, and looked up quickly, but the form of Sister Francoise, standing, concealed the figure of the speaker, who seemed to be stooping over the child.

"Ay! wha's bairn is it?" inquired another voice, that fell with ominous familiarity on her ear, as she turned her head a little and saw the female visitor, a tall, handsome blonde, with bold, blue eyes and a cataract of golden hair falling on her shoulders.

Sister Francoise did not understand the language of the woman, and turned with a helpless and appealing look to the gentleman, who, still speaking French with the slightly defective English accent, replied:

"Madame asks whose child is that?"

"Oh, pardon! We do not know, Monsieur. It was left at our doors on the eighteenth of December last," replied Sister Francoise.

"A very fine child! Its name?"

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"Marie Perdue."

"'Marie Perdue?' What? 'Marie Perdue?' What's 'Perdue?'" querulously inquired the tall, blonde beauty.

"'Thrown away,' 'lost,' 'abandoned,'" answered the gentleman, in a low voice.

As he spoke he stood up and turned around.

Salome uttered a low, half-suppressed cry, and covered her face with both hands.

The abbess impulsively looked up to see what was the matter, and—echoed the cry!

There was dead silence in the room for a minute, and then Salome lifted up her head and cautiously looked around.

The visitors had gone, and the children, who with childlike curiosity had suspended their play to gaze upon the strangers, were now re-commencing their noise with renewed vehemence.

Salome, still trembling in every limb, turned toward her companion.

The abbess sat with clasped hands, lowered eyelids, and face as pale as death.

Salome, too much absorbed in her own emotion to notice the strange condition of the abbess, touched her on the shoulder and eagerly whispered:

"Mother, did you observe the visitors?"

"Yes," breathed the lady, in a very low tone, without lifting her eyelids.

"Did you notice—*the man?*" Salome continued.

"I did," murmured the abbess, in an almost inaudible voice, as she devoutly made the sign of the cross.

"Do you know who he was?"

"I do."

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"He was like our Christmas visitor in the chapel! He was the Duke of Hereward!"

"Nay," said the abbess, in a stern solemn voice. "He was not the Duke of Hereward. He was one whom I had reckoned as numbered with the dead full twenty years ago!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE ABBESS' STORY

"'NOT the Duke of Hereward!'" echoed Salome, astonishment now overcoming every other emotion in her bosom.

The abbess bowed her head in grave assent.

"'One whom you thought numbered with the dead full twenty years ago?'" continued Salome, quoting the lady's own words, and gazing on her face.

"Full twenty-five years ago, my daughter, or longer still," murmured the abbess.

"This man is young. He could not have been grown up to manhood twenty-five years ago."

"He is well preserved, as the selfish and heartless are too apt to be; but he is not young."

"And he is not the Duke of Hereward?"

"Most certainly not the Duke of Hereward."

"Then in the name of all the holy saints, madam, *who* is he?" demanded Salome, in ever increasing amazement.

"He is the Count Waldemar de Volaski, once my betrothed husband, but who forsook me, as I have told

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you, for another and a fairer woman," gravely replied the abbess.

"Once your betrothed husband, madam? Great Heaven! are you sure of this?" exclaimed Salome, in consternation.

"Yes, sure of it," answered the abbess, slowly bending her head.

"But—pardon me—I thought that *he* had been killed in a duel by the lover of the woman whom he had won."

"Even so thought I. The news of his falsehood and of his death at the hands of the wronged lover, came to me in my convent retreat at the same time, and I heard no more of him from that day to this, when I have again seen him in the flesh. The saints defend us!"

"And you are absolutely certain that he was Count Waldemar?"

"I am absolutely certain."

"Mother Genevieve, did you know the woman who was with him?"

"No, not at all. I never saw or heard of her before. She seems to belong to the *demi-monde,* for she dresses like a princess, and talks like a peasant. Let us not speak of her," said the lady, coldly.

"We *must* speak of her, for I think I know who she is."

"You recognize her, then?"

"I cannot say that I do; at least, not by her person. I never saw her face before; but I have heard her voice under circumstances that rendered it impossible for me ever to forget its tones; and from her voice I believe her to be Rose Cameron, a Highland peasant girl of Ben Lone."

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"Stop!" exclaimed the mother-superior, suddenly raising her hand. "You do not mean to intimate that *she* is the girl whom you overheard talking with the young Duke of Hereward at midnight, under your balcony, on the night before the murder of Sir Lemuel Levison?"

"She is the very same woman, as he is the very same man, who *planned,* if they did not perpetrate the robbery—who *caused,* if they did not commit, the murder; and their names are John Scott, Duke of Hereward, and Rose Cameron."

"My daughter, in regard to the girl you may be quite right; but in respect to the man you are utterly wrong."

"Should I not know my own betrothed husband?" demanded Salome, impatiently.

"Should *I* not know *mine?*" inquired the abbess, very patiently.

Salome made a gesture of desperate perplexity, and then there was a silent pause, during which the two women sat gazing in each other's faces in silent wonder.

Suddenly Salome started up in wild excitement and began pacing the narrow cell with rapid steps, exclaiming:

"There have been strange cases of counterparts in persons of this world so exact as to have deceived the eyes of their most intimate friends. If this should be a case in point! Great Heaven, if it should! If this Count Waldemar de Volaski should be such a perfect counterpart of the Duke of Hereward as to have deceived even my eyes and ears! Oh, what joy! Oh, what rapture! What ecstasy to find 'the princely Hereward' as stainless in honor as he is noble in name; and this most unprincipled Volaski the real guilty party!

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But—the marriage certificate in Hereward's own name! The letters to his so-called 'wife,' Rose Cameron, in Hereward's own handwriting! Ah, no! there is no hope! not the faintest beam of hope! And yet——"

She suddenly paused in her wild walk, and looked toward the abbess.

That lady was still sitting on the stool, at the foot of the cot, with her hands folded on her lap, and her eyes cast down upon them as in deep thought or prayer.

Salome sat down beside her, and inquired in a low tone:

"Mother Genevieve, was the Count Waldemar de Volaski ever in Scotland? Has he been there within the last twelve months?"

The lady lifted her eyes to the face of the inquirer, and slowly replied:

"My daughter, how should I know? Have I not said that, until this day, when I have seen him in the flesh standing in this room, I had believed him to have been in purgatory for twenty-five years or more?"

"True! true!" sighed Salome.

The abbess folded her hands, cast down her eyes, and resumed her meditations or prayers.

"You heard that he was killed in a duel, you say?" persevered Salome.

"Yes; the news of his treachery, and the news of his death at the hands of the Duke of Hereward reached me at the same moment in this convent, where I was then passing the first year of mourning for my parents. It was that news which decided me to take the veil and devote my life and fortune to the service of the Lord," said the lady, reverently bending her head.

Salome sat staring stonily as one petrified. She was

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absolutely speechless and motionless from amazement for the space of a minute or more. Then suddenly recovering her powers, she exclaimed:

"Mother! Mother Genevieve! For Heaven's sake! Did I understand you? From *whose* hand did you hear Count Waldemar received his death in a duel?"

"From the hand of the deeply injured husband, of course."

"But—who was he? Who? You mentioned a name!" wildly exclaimed Salome.

"Did I mention a name? Ah! what inadvertence! I never intended to let that name slip out. I am very sorry to have done so. *Mea culpa! Mea culpa! Mea maxima culpa!*" muttered the abbess, bending her head and smiting her bosom.

"Mother Genevieve! Oh, do not trifle with me! *do* not torture me! I heard a name! Did I hear aright? Oh, I hope I did not! What name did you murmur? Tell me! tell me! WHO met Count Waldemar in a duel?" demanded Salome.

"I have no choice but to tell you now, though I would willingly have kept the fact from you. It *was* the Duke of Hereward, the late duke, of course, the deeply wronged lover of that fair woman, who met, and, as I heard, killed Count Waldemar de Volaski. But there were wrongs on both sides, deep, deadly wrongs on every side!" moaned the lady, clasping her hands convulsively and lowering her eyes.

"The Duke of Hereward! Heaven of heavens! the Duke of Hereward! Yes! I heard aright the first time; but I could not believe my own ears! The father of my betrothed!" murmured Salome, sinking back in her seat.

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The abbess gravely bent her head.

"What of the frail woman? She was not—oh! no, she *could not* have been the mother of the present duke?"

"No," murmured the abbess, in a low voice.

"Mother Genevieve!" exclaimed Salome, suddenly, "will you tell me all you know of this terrible story?"

"My daughter, my past is dead and buried these many years; so I would leave it until the last great day of the Resurrection. Nevertheless, as the story of my life is interwoven with that of the princely line in whom you feel so deep an interest, I will relate it."

"Thanks, good mother," said Salome, nestling to her side and preparing to listen.

"Not here, and not now, my child, can I enter upon the long, sorrowful, shameful story—a story of pride, despotism and cruelty on one side; of passion, wilfulness and recklessness on the other; of selfishness, sin and ruin on all sides! Daughter, in almost every tale of sin and suffering you will find that there has always been sin on *one* side and suffering on the *other;* but in this story *all* sinned deeply, all suffered fearfully!"

"Except yourself, sweet mother. You never sinned," said Salome, taking the thin, pale hand of the lady and pressing it to her lips.

"*Mea culpa!* I sin every hour of my life!" cried the abbess, crossing herself.

"We all do; but you did not sin *there,*" said the girl.

"I had no part—no active part, I mean—in that tale of guilt and woe. I was a pupil here in this convent then, waiting to be brought out and married to my betrothed. No, I had no part in that tragedy."

"Except the passive part of suffering."

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"Ay, except the passive part of suffering; but hark, my child! the vesper bell is ringing; it calls us to our evening worship; let us go to the choir, and there forget all our earthly cares and seek the peace of Heaven," said the pale lady, slowly rising from her seat.

"When will you tell me the story, good mother?" pleaded Salome, in a low and deprecating tone.

"The vesper bell is ringing. The rules of the house must not be disturbed by your individual necessities. After the evening service comes the evening meal. Then, for me, my hour of rest in my cell; and for you, the duty of seeing your infant charge put to bed. When all these matters have been properly attended to, come to me in my cell. You will find me there. We shall be uninterrupted until the midnight mass; and in the interim I will tell you the story of a life that 'was lost, but is found, was dead, but is alive'—*Benedicite,* my daughter!" said the abbess, spreading her hands upon the bowed head of the girl, and solemnly blessing her.

Then she glided away.

Salome soon followed her, and joined the procession of nuns to the chapel.

As soon as she took her seat in the choir, she looked through the screen over the congregation below, to see if the strangers were in the chapel; but she saw them not.

When the vesper service was over, she took her tea with the nuns in their refectory; and then returned to the playroom in the Infants' Asylum.

The nurses were engaged in giving the little ones their supper, and putting them to bed.

Salome took up her own little Marie Perdue, to undress her.

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As she divested the child of her little slip, something rolled out of its bosom and dropped upon the floor.

One of the nurses picked it up and handed it to Salome.

It was a small, hard substance, wrapped in tissue paper.

Salome unrolled it and found a ring, set with a large solitaire diamond. With a cry of surprise and pain, she recognized the jewel. It was her late father's ring! While she gazed upon it in a trance of wonder, the paper in which it had been wrapped, caught by a breeze from the open window, fluttered under her eyes. She saw that there was writing on the paper, and she took it up and read it.

"The ring must be sold for the benefit of the child and of the house that has protected her. She must be educated to become a nun."

There was no signature to this paper.

Salome rolled it around the ring again, and put it in her bosom, then she sent one of the nurses to call Sister Francoise.

When the old nun came into her presence, she inquired:

"Sister Francoise, you showed a lady and gentleman through the asylum, this afternoon; they came into this room; they stopped and noticed little Marie Perdue particularly. Did they ask any questions or make any remarks concerning her? I have an especial reason for asking."

"Oh, yes, sister! they did ask many questions—when she came, how long she had been, who took care of her, what was her name, and many more; and as I answered them to the best of my knowledge, I could not help see-

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ing that they knew more about the child than I did," answered the nun, nodding her head.

"Did the gentleman or lady give anything to the child?"

"Not that *I* saw, which I thought unkind of them, considering all the interest they showed in *words;* for, as I say, of all the fine ladies who come here and fondle the infants, what's the use of all the fondling if they never put a sou out, or a stitch in?"

"That will do, sister; I only wanted to know," answered the young lady, as she determined to keep her own counsel, and confide the news of the surreptitiously offered ring to the abbess only.

When she had rocked her child to sleep, laid it on its little cot, and placed two novices on duty to watch over the slumbers of the children, she left the dormitory by the rectangular passage that led to the nuns' house, and repaired at once to the cell occupied by the abbess.

It was a plain little den, in no respect better than those tenanted by her humble nuns, twelve feet long, by nine broad, with bare walls, and bare floor, and a small grated window at the farther end, opposite the narrow, grated door by which the cell was entered. It was furnished poorly with a narrow cot bed, a wooden stool, and a small stand, upon which lay the office-book of the abbess, and above which hung the crucifix.

As Salome entered the cell, the abbess arose from her knees and signed for her visitor to be seated.

Salome sat down on the foot of the cot, and the abbess drew the stool and placed herself near.

Then Salome saw the lady-superior was even paler and graver than usual; and anxious as the young lady felt to hear the abbess' story, she thought she would give

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her more time to recover, and even assist her in doing so, by diverting her thoughts to the new incident of the ring, which she produced and laid upon the mother's lap, saying:

"That was found by me in the bosom of little Marie Perdue's dress. It was donated to the house, for the benefit of the child. Here is the scrap of writing in which it was rolled."

The abbess silently took up the ring and the paper, and examined the first and read the last, saying:

"Such mysterious donations to the children are not uncommon, and are generally supposed to be offered by the unknown parents. This, however, is by far the most valuable present that has ever been made by any one to the institution, and must be worth at least a thousand napoleons. It was made by the visitor of this morning, I suppose?"

"Yes, madam, it was."

"I see; I understand. Take charge of it, my daughter, until we can deliver it to the sister-treasurer," directed the lady-superior, as she replaced the ring in its wrapper and returned both to Salome.

"But, mother, I wish myself to become the purchaser of this ring. I have a thousand pounds with me. I will give them for the ring."

"My daughter!" exclaimed the abbess, in surprise. "Why should you wish to possess this bauble? It can be of no use to you in the life you are about to enter, even if the rules of our order would permit you to retain it, which you know they would not."

"Mother! it was my father's ring! It was a part of the property stolen from him on the night of his murder," solemnly answered Salome.

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"Holy saints! can that be true?" exclaimed the abbess.

"As true as truth. I know the ring well. He always wore it on his finger. Inside the setting is his monogram, 'L. L.,' and his crest, a falcon," answered Salome, once more unwrapping the ring and offering it to the inspection of the lady-superior.

"I see! I see! It is so. Ah, Holy Virgin! that it should have been offered by Count Waldemar, or by him whom you overheard conspiring with his female companion under the windows on the night of your father's murder!" cried the abbess, covering her face with a fold of her black veil.

"Count Waldemar, or the duke of Hereward, I know not which, I know not whom. Oh! mother, this mystery grows deeper, this confusion more confounded."

"Take back your ring, my child, and keep it without price. It was your father's, and it is yours. We cannot receive stolen goods even as alms offered to our orphans," said the abbess, dropping her veil and returning the jewel.

"I will take it and keep it because it was my dear father's; but I will give a full equivalent for its value. No one could object to that," said Salome, as she replaced the ring in her bosom. "And now, Mother Genevieve, will you tell me the promised story? It may possibly throw some light even upon this dark mystery."

The pale abbess bowed assent, and immediately began the narrative, which, for the sake of convenience, we prefer to render in our own words.

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CHAPTER IX

THE DUKE'S DOUBLE

First it is necessary to revert to the history of the Scotts of Lone, Dukes of Hereward.

He who married Salome Levison was the eighth of his princely line. Any one turning to Burke's Peerage of the preceding year, might have read this record of the late duke:

"Hereward, Duke of (Archibald-Alexander-John Scott), Marquis of Arondelle and Avondale in the Peerage of England, Earl of Lone and Baron Scott in the Peerage of Scotland; born, 1st of Jan., 1800; succeeded his father as seventh duke, 1st Feb., 1840; married, first, March 15th, 1843, Valerie, only daughter of Constantine, Baron de la Motte; divorced, Nov. 1st, 1844; married, secondly, July 15th, 1845, Lady Katherine-Augusta, eldest daughter of the Earl of Banff, and has a son—Archibald-Alexander-John, Marquis of Arondelle, born 1st of May, 1846."

A whole domestic tragedy is comprised in one line of this record:

"Married, first, March 15th, 1843, Valerie, only daughter of Constantine, Baron de la Motte; divorced, Nov. 1st, 1844."

Now as to this poor, unhappy first wife:

Some few years before this first fatal marriage, the Baron de la Motte, one of the most illustrious French statesmen, was dispatched by his sovereign as Envoy

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Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from the Court of France to the Court of Russia.

The baron, with his suite, proceeded to St. Petersburg, accompanied by the baroness, a handsome Italian woman, and by their only child, Valerie, a beautiful brunette of only seventeen summers.

Valerie de la Motte was first introduced to the world of fashion at a great court ball, given by the Czar, in honor of the French Ambassador, in the Imperial Palace of Annitchkoff.

On this occasion the dark, brilliant beauty of Mademoiselle de la Motte, inherited from her Italian mother, was the more admired from its rarity and its perfect contrast to the radiant fairness of the Russian blondes. Here Valerie de la Motte met, for the first time, Waldemar de Volaski, the second son of the Polish Count de Volaski, and a captain of the Royal Guards, stationed at the palace. He was but twenty years of age, yet a model of fair, manly beauty. He was even then called "the handsomest man in all the Russias."

There was a Romeo and Juliet case of love at first sight between the young Russian officer and the youthful French heiress.

During the first season, the beauty's hand was sought by some among the most princely of the nobles that surrounded the throne of the Czar; but, to the disappointment of her ambitious parents, she refused them every one.

Certainly the French father might have followed the custom of his class and country, and coerced his young daughter into the acceptance of any husband he might have chosen for her; but he did not feel disposed to use harsh measures with his only and idolized child; he

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rather preferred to exercise patience and forbearance toward her, until she should have outlived what he called her childish caprices.

It was, however, no childish caprice that governed the conduct of Valerie de la Motte, but the unfortunate and fatal passion, inspired by the handsome young captain of the Royal Guards, whom she had waltzed with about a half a dozen times at the court balls.

Waldemar de Volaski was indeed as beautiful as the youthful god, Apollo Belvidere, and in his radiant blonde complexion a perfect contrast to the dark, splendid style of the lovely brunette, Valerie de la Motte; but he was only a younger son, with no hope or prospect of succession to his father's title or estates.

He did not dare openly to seek the hand of Mademoiselle de la Motte, for he knew that to do so would only be to have himself banished forever from her presence, by her ambitious father; but, loving her with all the passion of his heart, he sought secretly to win her love, and he succeeded.

It would seem strange that the carefully shielded daughter of the French minister should have been exposed to courtship by the young captain of the Royal Guards; but love is fertile in devices, and full of expedients, and "laughs," not only "at locksmiths," but at all other obstacles to its success.

The wilful young pair loved each other ardently from the first evening of their meeting, and they could not endure to think of such a possibility as their separation. They found many opportunities, even in public, of carrying on their secret courtship. In the swimming turn of the waltz, hands clasped hands with more impassioned earnestness than the formula of the round

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dance required: in the casual meetings in the fashionable promenades of the beautiful summer gardens in Aptekarsoi Island—

"Eyes looked love to eyes that spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell,"

so long as they could see each other every day.

As the summer passed, the young captain, grown more confident, wrote ardent love letters to his lady, which were surreptitiously slipped into her hands at casual meetings, or conveyed to her by means of bribed domestics; and these the wilful beauty answered in the same spirit, as opportunity was offered her by the same means. But—

"A change came o'er the spirit of their dream."

The French minister was recalled home by his sovereign, and only awaited the arrival of his successor to take an official leave of the Czar.

About this time a letter from Volaski to Valerie was sent by the captain's faithful valet, and put in the hands of the lady's confidential maid, who secretly conveyed it to her mistress. This letter, which was fiery enough to have set any ordinary postbag in a blaze, declared, among other matters, that the lady's answer would decide the writer's fate, for life or for death.

Mademoiselle de la Motte sat down and wrote a reply which she sent by her confidential maid, who placed it in the hands of the captain's faithful valet, to be secretly carried to his master.

Whether the answer decided the fate of the lover for

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life or for death, it certainly controlled his action in an important matter. Immediately on its receipt he hastened to the Hotel de l' Etat Major, the headquarters of the army department, and solicited a month's leave of absence to visit his father's family.

As it was the very first occasion upon which the young officer had asked such a favor, it was promptly granted him.

Of course no one suspected that the cause of the young captain's action had been the announcement that the French minister had been recalled by his government, and was about to return to Paris.

The next day Waldemar de Volaski left St. Petersburg, ostensibly to visit his father's estates in Poland.

And the next week the French minister, having presented his successor to the Czar, and received his own congé, left the court and the city, and set out for France.

The ministerial party traveled by the new railway from St. Petersburg to Warsaw, a distance of nearly seven hundred miles.

At the capital of Poland they designed to stop a few days to rest the baroness, whose health was suffering.

One day while in that city the baroness, her daughter, and the lady's maid, went out together, shopping for curiosities in the Marieville Bazaar, a square in the midst of the city, surrounded by many gay arcades.

The square was full of visitors, and every arcade was crowded with customers.

The baroness became somewhat interested in her purchases, and from moment to moment turned to consult her daughter, who seemed ever ready to assist her choice.

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At length, however, in speaking to Mademoiselle de la Motte, her mother failed to receive an answer.

Turning to rebuke the inattention of her daughter, the baroness discovered that Valerie was missing.

Thinking only that she had got mixed up with the crowd, yet feeling very much annoyed thereat, Madam de la Motte called her maid and instituted a search, only to find, with dismay, that Mademoiselle was nowhere in the square.

Believing then that the young girl must have taken the extraordinary and very reprehensible proceeding of returning to the hotel alone and resolving to give her daughter a severe reprimand for her imprudence, the baroness returned to their temporary home, only to learn that Mademoiselle de la Motte had not been seen there by any one since she had left the house in company with her mother, attended by her maid.

Fearing then that her daughter, in rashly attempting to return home alone, had lost herself in the streets of Warsaw, the baroness sent messengers in every direction to seek for her and guide her back.

Meanwhile, the Baron de la Motte, who had been to inspect the fine gallery of paintings preserved in the old villa of Stanislaus Augustus, returned to his hotel, and was informed by the now half distracted baroness of the disappearance of their daughter.

The Baron, struck with dismay, inquired into the circumstances of the case, and was told of the shopping expedition to the Marieville Bazaar, where Valerie was first missed.

"It was at her own earnest solicitation that I took her there, to pick up some of the curiously carved jewelry and trinkets. First, she wished, in consideration of my

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health, to go there attended only by her maid; but I would not allow any such indiscretion. I took her there myself, and even while I was talking with her before one of the arcades, she vanished like a spirit! One moment she was there, the next moment she was gone! We looked for her immediately, but found no trace of her."

The baron replied not one word to this explanation, but took his hat and walked out to join the search for the missing girl, while the baroness remained in her rooms, a prey to the most poignant anxiety.

It was near midnight when the baron returned, looking full ten years older than he did when he went forth.

No trace of the missing girl had been found, and whether her disappearance was a flight or an abduction no one could even conjecture.

The condition of the agonized mother became critical; she could not be persuaded to lie down, or to cease from her restless walking to and fro in her chamber.

At length, a physician was summoned, who administered a potent sedative, which conquered her nervous excitement, and laid her in a blessed sleep upon her bed.

The next morning the search, which had not been quite abandoned even during the night, was renewed with great vigor, stimulated by the large rewards offered by the afflicted father for the recovery of his lost child; but still no trace of Valerie de la Motte could be found, no news of her be heard.

And so, without any change a week passed away, and then, while the baroness lay in extreme nervous prostration, hovering between life and death, and the baron crept about her bed like a man bowed down by the in-

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firmities of age, and all hope seemed gone, a letter arrived from Mademoiselle de la Motte to her parents.

It was written from San Vito, a small mountain hamlet in the northern part of Italy. By this letter she informed them that she was safe and happy as the wife of Captain Waldemar de Volaski, who had long possessed her heart, and to whom she had just given her hand. She begged her father and mother to pardon her for having sought her happiness in her own way, and assured them, notwithstanding her seemingly unfilial conduct, she still cherished the strongest sentiments of love and honor toward them both, and ever remained their dutiful and affectionate daughter—VALERIE DE LA MOTTE DE VOLASKI.

The mother, who under any other circumstances would have been overwhelmed with mortification and sorrow at this *mésalliance* of her daughter, was now so glad to know that Valérie was alive and in health, even though as the bride of a poor young captain of the Guards, that she thanked Heaven earnestly, and rejoiced exceedingly.

But the baron, who would as willingly have never heard of his lost daughter, as that she had so degraded herself, left his wife's bedchamber abruptly, and went off to his smoking-room, where he could vent his feelings by cursing and swearing to his heart's content.

The next day the Baron de la Motte, breathing maledictions, set out for Italy, accompanied by the baroness, who had wonderfully rallied in health and strength since she had received news of her missing daughter.

The proud baroness was, in one respect, like the poor Hebrew mother of the Bible story. She preferred to

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give up her child to another claimant rather than lose that beloved child by death.

The baron's party traveled day and night, without pause or rest, until they crossed the northern frontier of Italy, and halted at the little hamlet of San Vito, at the foot of the Apennines.

Here they found the fugitive pair living a sort of Arcadian life; and here they learned the facts which they had not hitherto even suspected.

Captain Waldemar de Volaski and Mademoiselle Valerie de la Motte had loved each other from the first moment of their meeting at the ball given in honor of the French minister, at the Imperial Palace of Annitchkoff, and had betrothed themselves to each other during the first month of their acquaintance. They had kept their betrothal a secret, only because they felt assured it would meet with the most violent opposition from the young lady's haughty parents; but they had carried on a constant epistolary correspondence through the instrumentality of the lover's valet and the lady's maid; but they had not intended to take any decisive step, until, at length, they were both startled by the recall home of the French minister.

When the announcement of this event reached the ears of Waldemar de Volaski, he was filled with despair at the prospect of parting from his betrothed.

He instantly dashed off a hasty letter to Valerie de la Motte, earnestly entreating her to have his life and his reason, and secure their happiness, by consenting to an immediate marriage.

Mademoiselle de la Motte, closing her ears to the voice of conscience and discretion, and listening only to

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the pleadings of a reckless and fatal passion, wrote a favorable answer.

They knew that their plan would be exceedingly difficult of execution; but this did not deter them.

They made their arrangements with more tact than could have been expected of so youthful a pair of lovers.

He obtained leave of absence and left St. Petersburg, as has been stated, upon the pretext of visiting his father's estate in Poland; but really with the intention of preceding the minister's party to Warsaw, where, he had learned, they would break their journey and remain for a few days to recruit the strength of the baroness.

There, disguised as a peasant, and concealed in the suburban cottage of a faithful retainer of his family, Waldemar de Volaski waited for the arrival of the baron's party.

Then, through the instrumentality of the lover's valet and the lady's maid, a meeting was arranged between the imprudent young pair, at the Marieville Bazaar.

There Mademoiselle de la Motte found her lover watching for her.

Taking advantage of a few minutes during which her mother was engaged in the examination of some curious malachite ornaments, Valerie de la Motte slipped into the thickest of the crowd, joined her lover, and escaped with him to the suburban hut of the old retainer, where she changed her clothes, and from whence, in the disguise of a page, and carrying her female apparel in a small valise, she finally fled with him to Italy.

They stopped at the little mountain hamlet of San Vito, where she resumed her proper dress, and where, by a lavish expenditure of money, and a liberal dis-

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bursement of fair words, Waldemar de Volaski prevailed on a priest to perform the marriage ceremony between himself and Valerie de la Motte.

When this was done, the reckless pair took lodgings at a vine-dresser's cottage in the neighborhood of the hamlet, to spend their honeymoon, and wait for "coming events."

The coming events came. The parents arrived, and found the lovers living carelessly and happily in their Arcadian home. Here the outraged and infuriated father thundered into the ears of the newly-married pair the terrible truth that their marriage was no marriage at all without his consent, but was utterly null and void in the law.

At this astounding revelation, Valerie, overwhelmed with humiliation, fainted and fell, and was tenderly cared for by her mother; but the gallant captain very coolly replied that he knew the fact perfectly well, and had always known it, although Mademoiselle de la Motte had not even suspected it; and he ventured to represent to the haughty baron, that their illegal marriage only required the sanction of his silent recognition to render it perfectly legal, and that for his daughter's own sake he was bound to give it such recognition.

This aroused the baron to a perfect frenzy of rage. He charged Volaski with having traded in Mademoiselle de la Motte's affections and honor, from selfish and mercenary motives alone, and swore that such deep, calculating villainy should avail the villain nothing. He would not ratify his daughter's marriage with such a caitiff, but would use his parental power to tear her from her unlawful husband's arms, and immure her in the living tomb of an Italian convent.

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He finished by dashing his open hand with all his strength full into the mouth of the bridegroom, inflicting a severe blow, and covering the handsome face with blood.

Valerie de la Motte, in a fainting condition, was placed in the cart of a vine-dresser, the only conveyance to be found, and carried to a neighboring nunnery, where she lay ill for several weeks, tenderly nursed by her sorrowful mother and by the compassionate nuns.

The Baron de la Motte remained in the village, awaiting a challenge from Waldemar de Volaski; but when a week had passed away without such an event, the furious old Frenchman, bent upon his enemy's destruction, dispatched a defiance to Captain Volaski, couched in such insulting and exasperating language as compelled the young officer, much against his will, to accept it.

They met to fight their duel in a secluded glade of the forest, lying between the hamlet and the foot of the mountains.

At the first fire, Volaski, who was resolved not to wound the father of his beloved Valerie, discharged his pistol in the air, but instantly fell, shot through the lungs by the Baron de la Motte!

CHAPTER X

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

The Baron de la Motte, leaving Captain de Volaski stretched on the ground, to be cared for by the seconds and the surgeon in attendance, went back to the hotel and made preparations to leave San Vito.

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Mademoiselle de la Motte, still very weak from recent illness, was placed in a carriage at the risk of her life, and compelled to commence the journey back to France.

Madame de la Motte, grieved with the grief and anxious for the health of her daughter, dared not show the sufferer any pity or kindness.

Monsieur de la Motte was no longer the tender and affectionate father he had hitherto shown himself, for, in his bitter mortification and fierce resentment, his love seemed turned to hatred, his sympathy to antipathy.

The attenuated form, the pale face, and the sunken eyes of his once beautiful child, failed to move his compassion for her. He told her with brutal cruelty that he had slain her lover in the duel, and left him dead upon the ground; and that she must think no more of the villain who had dishonored her family.

On arriving in Paris, the baron established his household in the magnificent Hotel de la Motte, in the most aristocratic quarter of the city; and here began for Valerie a life that was a very purgatory on earth.

At home, if her purgatory could be called her home, she was studiously and habitually treated with scorn and contempt, as a creature unworthy to bear the family name, or share the family honors; until at length the child herself began to look upon her fault in the light her father wished her to see it, and with such exaggerating eyes, withal, that she came to think of herself as a dishonored criminal, unworthy even to live. Her grief sank to horror, and her depression to despair.

She was treated as an outcast in all respects but one, and this exception was an additional cruelty; for she was introduced into the gay world of fashion, and compelled to mix in all its festivities, at the same time

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being sternly warned that if this same world should suspect her fault, she should not be received in any drawing-room in Paris.

Valerie was too broken-spirited to answer by telling the truth, that the world and the world's favor had lost all attraction for her, who would willingly have retired from it forever.

Valerie was presented to society as Mademoiselle de la Motte, and nothing was said of her stolen marriage with the young Russian officer.

That season was perhaps the gayest Paris had ever known during the quiet reign of the citizen king and queen. Brilliant festivities in honor of the Spanish marriages were the order of the days and nights. Representatives from every court in Europe were present, as special messengers of congratulation—or expostulation; for it will be remembered the Spanish marriages were not universally popular with the sovereigns of Europe.

Among the representatives of the English Court, present at the Tuileries, was the seventh Duke of Hereward, recently come into his titles and estates.

It was at a ball at the Tuileries that Valerie de la Motte first met the Duke of Hereward, then a very handsome man of middle age, of accomplished mind and courtly address. The beautiful, pale, grave brunette at once interested the English duke more than all the blooming and vivacious beauties at the French capital could do. At every ball, dinner, concert, play, or other place of amusement where Mademoiselle de la Motte appeared with her parents, the Duke of Hereward sought her out; and the more he saw of her, the more

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interested he became in her; and it must be confessed that the conversation of this handsome and accomplished man of middle age pleased the grave, sedate girl more than that of younger and gayer men could have done.

The duke, on his part, was not slow to perceive his advantage, and he would willingly have paid his addresses to Mademoiselle de la Motte in person, and won her heart and hand for himself, before speaking to her father on the subject; but as such a proceeding would not have been in accordance with the customs of the country, no opportunity was allowed him to do so; for whereas in England, or America, a suitor must win the favor of his lady before he asks that of her parents, in France the process is precisely the reverse of all this, and the lover must have the sanction of the father or mother, or both, before he may dare to woo the daughter; and this rule of etiquette holds good in all cases except in those of stolen marriages, which are illegal and disreputable.

It was not long, therefore, before the Duke of Hereward called at the Hotel de la Motte, and requested a private interview with the baron, which was promptly and politely accorded.

The duke then and there made known to the baron the state of his affections, and formally solicited the hand of Mademoiselle Valerie de la Motte in marriage.

The "mad duke" was not then mad; he had not squandered his princely fortune; his dukedom was one of the wealthiest as well as one of the oldest in the United Kingdom; the marriage he offered the baron's daughter was one of the most brilliant (under royalty) in Europe.

The baron did not hesitate a moment, but promptly

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accepted the proposals of the duke in behalf of his daughter.

The Duke of Hereward hurried away, the happiest man in Europe.

The Baron de la Motte went and informed his daughter that she must prepare to receive the middle-aged suitor as her future husband.

Now, Valerie, in a languid way, liked the Duke of Hereward better than any one else in the whole world except her mother, but she did not like him in the character of a husband. The idea of marriage even with him was abhorrent to her. In her first surprise and dismay at the announcement of the duke's proposal for her hand, and her father's acceptance of that proposal, she betrayed all the unconquerable antipathy she felt to the contemplated marriage; but in vain she wept and pleaded to be left in peace; to be left to die; to be sent to a convent; to be disposed of in any way rather than in marriage!

The baron was no longer a tender and compassionate father, but a ruthless and implacable tyrant.

Valerie's life had been a purgatory before, it was a hell now. She was covered with reproach, contumely and threats by her father; she was lectured and mourned over by her mother; and when her mother at length took sides with her father, in urging her to this marriage, the very ground seemed to have slidden from beneath her feet; she had not a friend in the world to whom to turn in her distress.

Meanwhile the Duke of Hereward was impatiently awaiting the promised summons to the Hotel de la Motte to meet Mademoiselle Valerie as his future wife.

Valerie believed that her young lover-husband had

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been slain in the duel with her father; and that she was free to bestow her hand, if she could not give her broken heart; she was worn out with the ignominious reproaches heaped upon her by her father; by the tears and sighs lavished upon her by her mother; by all the humiliation and degradations of her daily life, and by the dreariness and desolation of her home. She longed for peace and rest; she would gladly have sought them in a convent had she been permitted to do so, or in the grave, had she dared.

I repeat that she did not dislike the Duke of Hereward; but, on the contrary, she liked him better than any one else in the world, except her mother, and so it followed that at length she began to look upon a marriage with him as the only possible refuge from the horrors of her home.

What wonder, then, that, goaded and taunted by her father, implored by her mother, solicited by the handsome duke, believing her young lover to be dead, slain by the hands of her father, longing to escape from the persecutions of her family, prostrated in body and mind, broken in heart and in spirit, Valerie at last succumbed to the pressure brought to bear upon her, and accepted the refuge of the Duke of Hereward's love, although the very next moment, in honor of herself and him, she would willingly have recalled her decision, if she could have done so.

From the moment that her acceptance of the duke's proposal was announced to her parents, the domestic sky cleared; her ruthless tyrant became again her tender father; her weeping mother brightened into smiles; she herself was once more the petted daughter of the house, and her lover showed himself the proudest and happiest

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of men; and Valerie de la Motte would have been at peace but for her consciousness of the secret that they were all keeping from the duke.

"Mamma, he ought to be told, he is so good, so noble, so confiding. I feel like a wretch in deceiving him; he ought to be told of my fault before he commits himself by marrying me," she pleaded with her mother.

"Valerie, you frighten me half to death! Do not dream of such a folly as telling the duke anything about your mad imprudence in running away with the young Russian! It would make a great and terrible scandal! Your father would kill you, I do believe! Besides, for that fault, committed while you were in our keeping and under our authority, you are accountable only to me and to your father. Your betrothed husband has nothing to do with it. No good would come of your telling it; no harm can come of your keeping it. The wild partner of your imprudence is dead and buried, the saints be praised! and so he can never rise up to trouble your peace. While you are here with us, and under our authority, you must obey us, and hold your peace, and keep your secret," said the baroness.

"Come weal, come woe, my honor requires that this secret should be told to the noble and confiding gentleman who is about to make me his wife," murmured Valerie.

"Your honor, Mademoiselle, is in the keeping of your father, until, by giving you in marriage, he passes it into the keeping of your husband. You are not to concern yourself about it. If your father should deem that your 'honor' demands your secret to be confided to your betrothed husband, he will divulge it to him: if he does

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not divulge it, then rest assured honor does not require him to do so. Now let us hear no more about it."

Valerie sighed and yielded, but she was not satisfied.

The betrothal was immediately announced to the world, and the marriage, which soon followed, was celebrated in the church of Notre Dame with the greatest *éclat.*

Directly after the wedding the duke took his bride on a long tour, extending over Europe and into Asia; and after an absence of several months, carried her to England, and settled down for the autumn on his English patrimonial estate, Hereward Hold (for Castle Lone was then a ruin and Inch Lone a wilderness, which no one had yet dreamed of rebuilding and restoring).

The youthful duchess, in her quiet English home, was like Louise la Valliere in the Convent of St. Cyr, "not joyous, but content."

She tried to make her noble husband happy, by fulfilling all the duties of a wife—except one. She knew a wife should have no secrets from her husband, yet, in her fear of disturbing the sweet domestic peace in which her wearied spirit rested, she kept from him the secret of her first wild marriage.

At the meeting of Parliament in February, the Duke of Hereward took his beautiful young wife to London, and established her in their magnificent town-house—Hereward House, Kensington.

At the first Royal drawing-room at Buckingham Palace, the young duchess was presented to the queen, and soon after she commenced her career as a woman of fashion by giving a grand ball at Hereward House.

The Duke of Hereward was very fond and very proud of his lovely young bride, whose beauty soon became the

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theme of London clubs—though invidious critics insisted that she was much too pale and grave ever to become a reigning belle.

Yes, she was very pale and grave; peaceful, not happy.

Scarcely twelve months had passed since she had been cruelly torn from the idolized young husband of her youth and thrown into a convent, where the only news that she heard of him was, that he had been killed in a duel with her ruthless father. She had mourned for him in secret, without hope and without sympathy, and before the first year of her widowhood had passed—a widowhood she had been sternly forbidden by her father either to bewail or even to acknowledge—she had been driven by a series of unprecedented persecutions to give her hand where she could not give her broken heart, and to go to the altar with a deadly secret on her conscience, if not with a lie on her lips!

Now her persecutions had ceased, indeed; but not her sorrows. Her home was quiet and honored, her middle-aged husband was kind and considerate, and she loved him with filial affection and reverence; but she could not forget the husband of her youth, slain by her father; his memory was a tender sorrow cherished in the depths of her heart, the only living sentiment there, for it seemed dead to all else.

"If he were a living lover," she whispered to herself, "I should be bound by every consideration of honor and duty to cast him out of my heart—if I could! But for my dead boy, my husband, slain in the flower of his youth for my sake, I may cherish remembrance and sorrow."

Thus, it is no wonder that she moved through the

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splendor of her first London season, a beautiful, pale, grave Melpomene.

But the splendor of that season was soon to be dimmed.

News came by telegraph to the Duke of Hereward, announcing the sudden death of the Baron de la Motte, of apoplexy, in Paris.

Now much has been said and written about the ingratitude of children; but quite as much might be said of their indestructible affection. The Baron de la Motte had shown himself a very cruel father to his only child; he had shot down her young husband in a duel; yet, notwithstanding all that, Valerie was wild with grief at the news of his sudden death. She wondered, poor child, if she herself had not had some hand in bringing it on by all the trouble she had given him, although that trouble had passed away now more than twelve months since; and the late baron was known to have been a man of full habit and excitable temperament, and, withal, a heavy feeder and hard drinker—a very fit subject for apoplexy to strike down at any moment.

The Duke and Duchess of Hereward hastened to Paris, where they found the remains of the baron laid in state in the great saloon of the Hotel de la Motte, and the widowed baroness prostrated by grief, and confined to her bed.

The duke and duchess remained until after the funeral, when the will of the late baron was read. It was then discovered, for the first time, that his daughter, Valerie, was not nearly the wealthy heiress she was supposed to be.

All the late baron's landed estates went to the male

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heir-at-law, a young officer in the Chasseurs d' Afrique, then in Algiers. All his personal property, consisting of bank and railroad stocks, after a deduction as a provision for his widow, was bequeathed to his only daughter, Valerie, Duchess of Hereward. But this property was so inconsiderable, that, without other means, it would scarcely have sufficed for the respectable support of the mother and daughter.

After the settlement of the late baron's affairs, the duke and duchess would have returned immediately to London but for the condition of the widowed baroness' health.

Madame de la Motte had for years been a delicate invalid, and she had experienced, in the sudden death of her husband, a severe shock, from which she could not rally; so that, within a few weeks after the baron's remains had been laid in the family vault, she passed away, and hers were laid by his side.

Valerie was even more prostrated with sorrow by the loss of her mother than she had been by that of her father.

The duke, to distract her grief, telegraphed to New Haven, where his yacht, the *Sea-Bird,* was lying, to have her brought over to meet him at Dieppe, took his duchess down to that little seaport and embarked with her for a voyage to Norway.

The season was most favorable for such a northerly voyage. They sailed on the first of July, and spent three months cruising about the coasts of Norway, Iceland, and down to the Western Isles. They returned about the first of October.

The duke left his yacht at Dieppe, and, accompanied

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by the duchess, went up to Paris, to attend to some business connected with the estate of the late baron.

As but a third of a year had passed since the death of her parents, and the duchess had scarcely passed out of her first deep crape mourning, she went very little into society. Nevertheless, she was constrained, at the duke's request, to accept one invitation.

There was to be a diplomatic dinner given at the British Legation, at which the Prussian, Austrian and Russian ministers, with the higher officers of their suites, were to be present.

Valerie, living her recluse life in the city, did not know the names of one of these ministers, nor, in the apathy of her grief, did she care to inquire.

On the evening appointed for the entertainment, she went to the hotel of the British Legation, escorted by her husband.

Dressed in her rich and elegant mourning of jet on crape, glimmering light on blackest darkness, and looking herself paler and fairer by its contrast, she entered the grand drawing-room, leaning on the arm of her husband. She heard their names announced:

"The Duke and Duchess of Hereward."

Then she found herself in a room sparsely occupied by a very brilliant company, and stood—not, as she had expected to stand, among strangers—but in the midst of her own familiar friends, whom she had known in her girlhood at the court of St. Petersburg, or met, in her womanhood, in the drawing-rooms of London.

It was while she was still leaning on her husband's arm and receiving the courteous salutations of her old friends, that their host, Lord C—n, approached with a gentleman.

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Valerie looked up and saw standing before her the young husband of her girlish love!

CHAPTER XI

RISEN FROM THE GRAVE

Waldemar de Volaski, left as dead upon the dueling ground by his antagonist, the Baron de la Motte, was tenderly lifted by his second and the surgeon in attendance, laid upon a stretcher, and conveyed to the infirmary of a neighboring monastery, where he was charitably received by the brethren.

When he was laid upon the bed, undressed, and examined, it was discovered that he was not dead, but only swooning from the loss of blood.

When his wound was probed, it was found that the bullet had passed the right lobe of the lungs, and lodged in the flesh below the right shoulder blade. To extract it, under the circumstances, or to leave it there, seemed equally dangerous, threatening, on the one hand, inflammation and mortification, and on the other, fatal hemorrhage. Therefore, the surgeon in charge of the case sent off to the nearest town to summon other medical aid, and meanwhile kept up the strength of the patient by stimulants. In the consultation that ensued on the arrival of the other surgeons, it was decided that the extraction of the bullet would be difficult and dangerous; but that in it lay the only chance of the patient's life.

On the next morning, therefore, Waldemar de Vo-

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laski was put under the influence of chloroform, and the operation was performed. His youth and vigorous constitution bore him safely through the trying ordeal, but could not save him from the terrible irritative fever that set in and held him in its fiery grasp for many days thereafter.

He was well tended by the holy brotherhood, who sent to the vine-dresser's cottage for information concerning him, that they might find out who and where were his friends, and write and apprise them of his condition.

But the vine-dresser could tell the monks no more than this: That the young man and young woman had come as strangers to the village, were married by the good Father Pietro in the church of San Vito, and had come to lodge in his cottage. The young pair had lived as merrily as two birds in a bush until the sudden arrival of an illustrious and furious signore, who tore the bride from the arms of her husband, and carried her off to the convent of Santa Madelena. That was all the vine-dresser knew.

The surgeon supplemented the vine-dresser's story with an account of the duel between the enraged baron and the young captain.

The good Father Pietro was next interviewed, and gave the names of the imprudent young pair whom he had tied together, as Waldemar Peter de Volaski and Valerie Aimee de la Motte; but besides this, who they were, or whence they came, he could not tell.

Inquiries were made in the village of San Vito, which only resulted in the information that the "illustrious" strangers had departed with their daughter no one knew whither.

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Meanwhile the unfortunate victim of the duel tossed and tumbled, fumed and raved in fever and delirium, that raged like fire for nine days, and then left him utterly prostrated in mind and body. Many more days passed before he was able to answer questions, and weeks crept by before he could give any coherent account of himself.

His first sensible inquiry related to his bride.

"Where is she? What have they done with her?" he demanded to know.

"The illustrious signore has taken the signorita away with him, no one knows whither," answered the monk who was minding him.

"I know—so he has taken her away?—I know where he has taken her—to Paris," faltered the victim, and immediately fainted dead away, exhausted by the effort of speaking these words.

His next question, asked after the interval of a week, related to the length of time he had been ill.

"How long have I lain stretched upon this bed?" he asked.

"The Signore Captain has been here four weeks," answered his nurse.

"Great Heaven! then I have exceeded my month's leave by two weeks! I shall be court-martialed and degraded!" cried the patient, starting up in great excitement, and instantly swooning away from the reaction.

In this manner the recovery of the wounded man became a matter of difficulty and delay; for as often as he rallied sufficiently to look into his affairs, their threatening aspect threw him back prostrated.

He recovered, however, by slow degrees.

As soon as he was able to sustain the continued exer-

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tion of talking, he requested one of the brothers on duty in the infirmary to write two letters at his dictation. The first was addressed to the colonel of his regiment, informing that officer of the long and severe illness of Captain de Volaski, and petitioning for the invalid an extended leave of absence. The other was to the Count de Volaski, apprising that nobleman of the condition of his son, and imploring him to hasten at once to the bedside of the patient.

The next morning Waldemar de Volaski sat up in bed and asked for stationery, and wrote with his own weak and trembling hand a short letter to his youthful bride—telling her that he had been very ill, but was now convalescent, and that as soon as he should be able to travel he would hasten to Paris and claim his wife in the face of all the fathers, priests and judges in Paris, or in the world. He addressed her as his well-beloved wife, signed himself her ever-devoted husband, and had the temerity to direct his letter to Madame Waldemar de Volaski, Hotel de la Motte, Rue Faubourg St. Honore, Paris.

The mail left St. Vito only twice a week, so that the three letters left the post-office on the same day to their respective destinations; one went to St. Petersburg, to the Colonel of the Royal Guards; one to Warsaw, to the Count de Volaski; and one to Paris, to Madame de Volaski.

In the course of the next week the writer received answers from all three letters. The first came from the colonel of his regiment, enclosing an extension of his leave of absence to three months; the second was answered in person by the Count de Volaski; the third

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was only an envelope, enclosing his letter to Valerie, crossed with this line:

"No such person to be found."

The meeting between the Count de Volaski and his reckless son was not in all respects a pleasant one. There was an explanation to be demanded by the father and a confession to be made by the son. The count was divided between his anxiety for his son and indignation at that son's conduct.

"You exposed more than your own life by the escapade, sir!" said the elder Volaski. "You abducted a minor, sir; for doing which you might have been prosecuted for felony, and sent to the gaol!—a fate so much worse than your death in the duel would have been for the honor of your family, that, had you been consigned to it, I should have cursed the hour you were born and blown my own brains out, in expiation of my share in your existence!"

The yet nervous invalid shuddered, and covered his face with his hands.

"But even that was not the greatest calamity your rashness provoked! You presumed to carry off the French minister's daughter while they were yet in the dominions of the Czar! by doing which you might have caused a war between two great nations, and the sacrifice of a million of lives!"

"Sir, forbear! I have not yet recovered from the severe illness consequent upon my wound. Surely, I have suffered enough at the hands of the ruthless Baron de la Motte!" said Waldemar de Volaski.

"The Baron de la Motte, being your enemy, is mine also; yet I cannot but admit that he has dealt very leniently with the abductor of his daughter by merely

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shooting him through the lungs, and laying him on a bed of repentance, when he might have prosecuted him as a felon, and sent him to penal servitude!" said the count, severely. "But there," he exclaimed, "I will say no more on that subject. As you say, you have suffered enough already to expiate your fault. You have nearly lost your life, and you have quite lost your love; for, of course, you know that your fooling marriage with a minor was no marriage at all, unless her father had chosen to make it so by his recognition. And if you ever had a chance of winning the girl, you have lost it by your imprudence. You must try to get up your strength now, so as to go with me back to Warsaw."

So saying, the count left the bedside of his son, and went into the refectory of the monastery, where a substantial repast had been prepared to regale the traveler.

The young man wrote yet another letter to his love, enclosing it on this occasion in an envelope directed to the lady's maid, who had once assisted the lovers in carrying on their correspondence; but as the maid had been long discharged from the service of her mistress, it was impossible that the letter should have reached her. The lover wrote again and again without receiving an answer to letters which it is certain his lost bride never received.

Captain de Volaski's three months' extended leave of absence had nearly expired before he was in a condition to travel; and even then he had to go by slow stages, riding only during the day and resting at night, until they reached Warsaw.

He spent a week at his father's castle, watched and wept over by his mother, who had not a reproach for her son, nor anything to offer him but her sympathy and

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her services. Six months had now passed away since his parting with his stolen bride; and it was the day before his expected return to his regiment that a packet of newspapers arrived for him, forwarded from St. Petersburg.

He tore the envelopes off them. They were English, French and German papers. He threw all away except the French papers. He eagerly examined them, in the hope of seeing the name of the Baron de la Motte, and forming thereby some idea of the movements of the family, and the whereabouts of Valerie.

The first paper he took up was *LeCourier de Paris,* and the first item that caught his eye was this:

MARRIED.—At the Church of Notre Dame, on Tuesday, March 1st, by the Most Venerable, the Archbishop of Paris, the Duke of Hereward, to Valerie, only daughter of the Baron de la Motte.

With the cry and spring of a panther robbed of its young, Volaski bounded to his feet. His rage and anguish were equal, and beyond all power of articulate or rational utterance. He strode up and down the floor like a maniac; he raved; he beat his breast, and tore his hair and beard; and finally, he rushed into the parlor where his father and mother were seated together over a quiet game of chess, and he dashed the paper down on the table before them, smote his hand upon the fatal marriage notice, and exclaimed in a voice of indescribable anguish:

"See! see! see! see!"

"It is just as I thought it would be," said the count, as he calmly read over the item, and passed it to his

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amazed wife. "The baron has wisely taken the first opportunity of marrying off his wilful girl—the best thing he could have done for her. I am sure I am glad she is no daughter-in-law of mine! She who could so lightly elope from her father might as lightly elope from her husband also."

Waldemar made no reply, but stood looking the image of desolation, until his mother having read through the notice, and grasped the situation, arose and threw her arms around his neck, exclaiming in a burst of sympathy:

"Oh, my son! my son! my son! my son! forget her! forget the heartless jilt! she was unworthy of you!"

A burst of wild and bitter laughter answered this appeal and frightened the good lady half out of her wits.

"Let him go back to his regiment and be a man among men, and not lose his time whimpering after a silly girl, who has not sense enough even to take care of herself. The man to be most pitied is that husband of hers! Upon my word and honor, I am sorry for that English duke! Yes, *that* I am!" said the count, heartily.

The next day Waldemar de Volaski returned to his regiment at St. Petersburg.

As his brother officers happily knew nothing of his elopement with the minister's daughter, and the duel that followed it, but supposed that his long absence had been occasioned by a long illness, he escaped all that exasperating chaff that might, under the circumstances, have half maddened him.

He threw himself, for distraction, into all the wildest gayeties of the Russian capital, and led the life of a

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reckless young sinner, until he was suddenly brought to his senses by a domestic calamity. He received a telegram announcing the sudden death of his father and his elder brother, both of whom were instantly killed by an accident on the St. Petersburg and Warsaw Railroad, while on their way to the Russian capital.

Stricken with grief, and with the remorse which grief is sure to awaken in the heart of a wrong-doer not altogether hardened, Waldemar de Volaski hastened down to Warsaw to support his almost inconsolable mother through the horrors of that sudden bereavement and that double funeral.

By the death of his father and elder brother, he became the Count Volaski, and the heir of all the family estates; and there were left dependent on him his widowed mother and several younger brothers and sisters.

At the earnest request of his mother he resigned his commission in the Royal Guards, and went down to reside with the family on the estate, during their retirement for the year of mourning.

Before that year was half over, however, the young Count de Volaski received a summons to the court of his sovereign.

He obeyed it immediately by hurrying up to St. Petersburg.

On his arrival, he presented himself at the Annitchkoff Palace to receive the commands of the Czar, and he was appointed Secretary of Legation to the new Russian Embassy about to proceed to Paris.

To Paris! to the home of Valerie de la Motte! The order agitated him to the profoundest depths of his being. He would have declined the honor about to be thrust upon him, could he have done so with propriety;

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but he could not, so there was no alternative but to kiss his sovereign's hand, express his sense of gratitude, and obey.

The embassy left St. Petersburg for the French capital almost immediately.

On the arrival at Paris they were established in the splendid Maison Francoise in the Champs Elysees.

As soon as he was at leisure, the Count de Volaski drove to the Rue Faubourg St. Honore, and to the Hotel de la Motte. He found the house shut up, and upon inquiry of a gendarme, learned, with more surprise than regret, that the Baron and Baroness de la Motte had both been dead for some months; the baron, who was a free liver, had been suddenly stricken down by apoplexy, and the baroness, whose health had long been feeble, could not rally from the shock, but soon followed her husband.

"And—where is their daughter, Madame la Duchesse d'Hereward?" hesitatingly inquired the Count de Volaski.

The gendarme could not tell; for he did not know; but supposed that she was living with her husband, Monsieur le Duc, on his estates in England.

No, clearly the gendarme did not know; for, in fact, the Duke and the Duchess of Hereward were at that time living very quietly in the closed up house at which the count and the gendarme stood gazing while they talked.

Count de Volaski re-entered his carriage and returned to the Maison Francoise in time to attend the official reception of the embassy by the citizen-king at the Tuileries.

After the act of national and official etiquette, the

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embassy were free to enter into the social festivities of the gayest capital in the world.

Among other entertainments, a diplomatic dinner was given at the English Legation, then the magnificent Hotel Borghese, once the residence of the beautiful Princess Pauline Bonaparte, now the seat of the British Embassy. Among the invited guests were the Russian minister and his Secretary of Legation, Count de Volaski.

The count came late and found the splendid drawing-room honored with a small, but brilliant, company of ladies and gentlemen, the former among the most celebrated beauties, the latter the most distinguished statesmen of Europe.

Nearly every one in the room were strangers to the Russian count; but his English host, with sincere kindness and courtesy, took care to present him to all the most agreeable persons present.

"And now," whispered Lord C——n, in conclusion, "I have reserved the best for the last. Come and let me introduce you to the most interesting woman in Paris."

Count de Volaski suffered himself to be conducted to the upper end of the room, where a tall and elegant-looking woman, dressed in rich mourning, stood, leaning on the arm of a stately, middle-aged man.

Her face was averted as they approached; but she turned her head and he recognized the beautiful, pale face and lovely dark eyes of his lost bride.

And while the floor of the drawing-room seemed rocking with him, like the deck of a tempest-tossed ship, he heard the words of his host whirling through his brain:

"Madame, permit me to present to you Count de Volaski of St. Petersburg; Count, the Duchess of Hereward."

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CHAPTER XII

FACE TO FACE

"MADAME, permit me to present to you Count de Volaski, of St. Petersburg—Count, the Duchess of Hereward," said Lord C., with old-time courtesy and formality.

The gentleman bowed low; the lady curtsied; nothing but the close compression of his lips beneath the golden mustache, and the paler shade on her pale cheeks, betrayed the "whirlwind of emotion" which swept through both their hearts; and these indications of disturbance were too slight to attract any attention.

Neither spoke, neither dared to speak. It was as much as each could do to maintain a conventional calmness through the terrible ordeal of such an introduction.

Lord C., happily unconscious of anything wrong, did the very best thing he could have done under the circumstances. Scarcely allowing the count and the duchess time to exchange their bow and curtsy, he turned to her companion and said:

"Duke, the Count de Volaski. Count, the Duke of Hereward."

Both gentlemen bowed; but *one,* the count, quivered from head to foot in the presence of his unconscious but successful rival.

"By the way, Count," said the duke, pleasantly, "the duchess, when Mademoiselle de la Motte, passed a year at the court of St. Petersburg with her parents. It is a wonder that you have not met before. Although, in-

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deed, you may have done so," he added, as with an afterthought.

"We have met before," replied the Count de Volaski, in a low and measured tone.

"Of course! Of course! You are quite old friends," said the duke, gayly.

Fortunately, then a diversion was made. The heavy, purple satin curtains veiling the arch between the drawing-rooms and dining saloon were drawn aside by invisible hands, and a very dignified and officer-looking personage, in a powdered wig, clerical black suit, and gold chain, appeared, and with a low bow and with low tones, said:

"My lord and lady are served."

"Count, will you take the duchess in to dinner?—Duke, Lady C. will thank you for your arm," said the host, as, with a nod and a smile, he moved off in search of that particular ambassadress whom custom, or etiquette, or policy, required him to escort to the dining-room.

The Duke of Hereward with a polite wave of the hand, left his duchess in the charge of her appointed attendant, and went to meet Lady C., who was advancing toward him.

Count Volaski bowed, and silently offered his arm to the young duchess.

She did not take it; she could not; she stood as one paralyzed.

He was stronger, firmer, calmer; perhaps because he really felt less than she did. He took her hand and drew it within his own, and led her to her place in the little procession that was going to the dining-room.

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He placed her in her chair at the table, and took his seat at her side.

Then the self-control of their order, the self-control instilled as a virtue by their education, and standing now in the place of all virtues, enabled them to maintain a superficial calmness that conducted them safely through the trying ordeal of this dinner table.

Count de Volaski entered freely into the conversation of the guests. The Duchess of Hereward spoke but little; hers was a passive self-control, not an active one; she could force herself to be, or seem, composed; she could not force herself to talk; but her deep mourning dress was a good excuse for her extreme quietness, which was naturally ascribed to her recent and double bereavement.

The dinner was a long, long agony to her; the courses seemed almost endless in duration and numberless in succession; but at length the hostess arose and gave the signal for the ladies to retire and leave the gentlemen to their wine and politics.

The gentlemen all stood up while the ladies passed out to the drawing-room.

Valerie would willingly have gone off to hide herself in some bay-window or other nook or corner of the vast drawing-room, and taken up a book or a piece of music as an excuse for her reserve; but as they passed through the curtained archway leading from the dining-saloon to the drawing-room, Lady C., with the kindest intentions toward the supposed mourner, and with the motherly grace for which her ladyship was noted, drew Valerie's arm within her own and began a conversation, to draw her mind from the contemplation of her bereavements.

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"What do you think of the young Russian count who brought you in to dinner, my dear?" inquired Lady C.

"I—he is a Pole," answered Valerie, in a low voice.

"Yes, I am aware that he is a Pole by birth; but he is a thorough Russian in politics and principles; has been in the service of the Czar since the age of fifteen. Here, my love, sit beside me," added her ladyship, as she sank gracefully down upon a sofa and drew her young guest to her side.

Valerie submitted in silence.

"Oh, by the way, however, I think I heard some one say that you had met the count at the court of St. Petersburg?" pursued Lady C.

"I—have met him," answered Valerie, in the same level tone.

"I am boring you, I fear, with this young Russian, my dear, but——"

"Oh, no," softly interrupted Valerie.

"I was about to explain that I feel some interest in him from the fact that he is betrothed to my niece——"

"Betrothed! Your niece!" exclaimed Valerie, surprised out of the apathy of her despair.

"Yes, my love. Is there anything wonderful in that? It is a way these continental people have of doing things, you see. The Count Waldemar and my niece were betrothed to each other in their childhood. There is a very great attachment between them—at least on her part. The child seems to think that there is but one man in the world and his name is Waldemar de Volaski."

"But—I did not know—I thought—I did not think—the count had ever been in England," incoherently murmured Valerie.

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"Nor has he; but what has that to do with it?" smiled her ladyship.

"Your niece——"

"Oh, I see! Because I am an Englishwoman my niece must be one, you think. You are mistaken, dear; she is French. My sister Anne married a Frenchman, the Marquis de St. Cyr. They had two children—Alphouse, a colonel in the Chasseurs d'Afrique, now in Algiers; and Aimee, now in the Convent of St. Rosalie. It was when the late Count de Volaski was here as the minister from Russia, that the acquaintance between the two families commenced and ripened into intimacy and the intimacy into friendship. Then Waldemar and Aimee were betrothed."

"How many years ago was that?" faintly inquired Valerie.

"Oh, about six—the young man was then about fifteen; the girl not more than twelve."

"They could not have known their own minds at that age," murmured Valerie.

"Oh, that was not at all necessary in a French betrothal," laughed the lady; "but, however, Aimee, child as she was, certainly knew her mind. The love of her betrothed husband was, and is, the religion of her life. I presume that Count Waldemar is equally constant; and that he will now press for a speedy marriage. My brother-in-law is down on his estates in Provence, just now; but I shall write and ask his permission to withdraw Aimee from her convent, in anticipation of her marriage, for of course she will be married from this house."

"But—her mother?"

"Oh! I should have told you; her mother, my dear

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sister Anne, passed away about a year after the betrothal of her daughter. The marquis took her loss very much to heart, and has never married again. The motherless girl has passed her life in a convent; but I hope to have her out soon. Here, my love, is an album containing portraits of my sister and brother-in-law and their children, taken at various times. You cannot mistake them, and they may interest you," said Lady C., taking a photographic volume from a gilded stand near, and laying it upon her guest's lap.

Valerie received it with a nod of thanks, and the lady glided away to give some of her attention to her other guests.

"The young English duchess is lovely, but too sad," said an embassadress, as the hostess joined her.

"Ah! yes; poor child! lost her father and mother within a few weeks of each other," answered Lady C.

"But that was six months ago; she ought to have recovered some cheerfulness by this time," remarked old Madame Bamboullet, who was a walking register of all the births, deaths and marriages of high life in Paris for the last half century.

"Well, you see she has not done so; but here come the gentlemen," observed Lady C., as a rather straggling procession from the dining-room entered.

The host, Lord C., went up to the embassadress to whom it was his cue to be most attentive.

The Duke of Hereward sought out his hostess, and entered into a bantering conversation with her.

Count Waldemar de Volaski came directly up to Valerie where she sat alone on the sofa in a distant corner of the room. The little gilded stand stood before her, and the photographic album lay open upon it. Her

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eyes were fixed upon the album, and were not raised to see the newcomer; but the sudden accession of pallor on her pale face betrayed her recognition of him.

He drew a chair so close to her sofa that only the little gilded stand stood between them. His back was toward the company; his face toward her; his elbows, with unpardonable rudeness, were placed upon the stand, and his hands supported his chin, as he stared into her pale face with its downcast eyes.

"Valerie," he said.

She did not look up.

"Valerie de Volaski!" he muttered.

"My wife!"

She shuddered, but did not lift her eyes.

She shrank into herself, as it were, and her eyes fell lower than before.

"Is it thus we two meet at last?" he demanded, in low, stern, measured tones, pitched to meet her ear alone. "Is it thus I find you, after all that has passed between us, bearing the name and title of another man who calls himself your husband; oh! shame of womanhood!"

"They told me our marriage was not legal, was not binding!" she panted under her breath.

"It should have been religiously, sacredly binding upon you as it was upon me, until we could have made it legal. It is amazing that you could have dreamed of marriage with another man!" muttered Volaski.

"But they told me you were dead. They told me you were dead!" she gasped, as if she were in her own death throes.

"Even if they had told you truly—even if I had been dead—dead by the hand of your father—could that cir-

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cumstance have excused you for rushing with such indecent haste to the altar with another man? It was but a poor tribute to the memory of the husband of your choice (if he had been dead) to marry again within six months."

"Oh, mercy! Oh, my heart! my heart! They forced me into that marriage, Waldemar! They forced me into that marriage! I was as helpless as an infant in the hands of my father and my mother!" she panted, in a voice that was the more heartrending from half suppression.

"Valerie! love! wife!" murmured Volaski, in low and tender tones, as he essayed to take her hand.

But she snatched it from him hastily, gasping:

"Do not speak to me in that way! Do not call me love or wife!"

"No man on earth has a better right to speak to you in this way than I have. No *other* man in the world has the right to call you love or wife but me! You *are* my wife!" grimly answered the young count.

"I am the wife of the Duke of Hereward. Oh, Heaven, that I were a corpse instead!" gasped Valerie.

"'The wife of the Duke of Hereward!' Have you then forgotten our betrothal at St. Petersburg? Our flight from Warsaw to St. Vito? Our marriage at the little chapel of Santa Maria? Our short, blissful honeymoon in the vine-dresser's cottage under the Apennines?" he inquired, bitterly.

"I have forgotten nothing! Oh, Heaven! Oh, earth! Oh, Waldemar! that I could die! that I could die!" she wailed in low, heartbroken tones.

It was well for her that the corner sofa stood in the

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shade, far removed from the seats of the other guests in that long drawing-room.

"Valerie! love! wife!" he murmured again.

"Oh, Waldemar, if I were your wife, as I truly believed myself then to have been, oh, why did you not defend and protect me from all the world, even from my father—even from myself? Oh, why did you suffer me to be torn from your protection, to be deceived with a false story of your death, and forced into this marriage? Oh, Waldemar! if I were indeed and in truth your lawful wife, as I believed myself to be, why, oh why did you permit all these evils to happen to me? Ah, what a position is mine! What a position! I cannot bear it! I will not bear it! I will not live! I will kill myself! I *ought* to kill myself! It is the only way out of this!" she wailed, wringing her hands.

"I will kill that Duke of Hereward!" hissed Volaski, through his clenched teeth.

"Hush! For mercy's sake, hush! Put away such thoughts from your heart! I, the only wrong-doer, should be the only victim! Whatever wrong has been done, the Duke of Hereward has been blameless. He knew nothing of my former marriage; if he had, I do not believe he would have married me, even if I had been a princess."

"He was deceived, then?" coldly inquired the count.

"He was; but not willingly by me. I was forced to be silent about my marriage."

"You were 'forced' from my protection! 'forced' to conceal the fact of your marriage with me! and 'forced' to marry the Duke of Hereward under false colors. Could force on one side, and feebleness on the other, l

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carried any further than this?" muttered Volaski, between his teeth.

"I knew how helpless, in the hands of my parents, I was," wailed Valerie.

"Well, you are a duchess! Do you love the Duke of Hereward?"

"Oh, mercy! what shall I say? He deserves all my love, honor, and duty!"

"Does he *get* his deserts??" mockingly inquired Volaski.

"Ah! wretch that I am, why do I live?—I give him honor and duty; but love! *love is not mine to give!*" she murmured, in almost inaudible tones.

Their conversation—if an interview so emotional, so full of "starts and flaws," could be called so—had been carried on in a very low tone, while the count turned over the leaves of the photographic album, as if examining the portraits, but really without seeing one.

They were, however, so absorbed that neither perceived the approach of a footman until the man actually set down a small golden tray with two little porcelain cups of tea on the stand between them, and retired.

Valerie looked up with a sudden shudder of terror. Had the company, or any one of their number, overheard any part of the fatal interview? No, the company were drinking tea, at the other end of the room.

And now the Duke of Hereward, with a tea-cup in his hand, sauntered toward them, saying, as he reached the stand:

"Lady C. has just been telling me that you are showing the duchess some interesting family pictures there—among the rest, those of your *belle fiancée*. When shall I congratulate you, Count?"

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"Not yet; I will advise your grace of my marriage," answered the count, gravely.

"Something gone wrong in that direction," thought the duke, but his good humor was invincible.

"If you have no engagement for to-morrow evening, I hope you will come and dine with us *en famille,* for we do not see much company, the duchess and myself."

Valerie cast an imploring look on the count, silently praying him to decline the invitation; but Volaski did not understand the meaning of the look, or did not care to do so, for he immediately accepted the invitation in the following unequivocal terms:

"I have no engagement for to-morrow; and I shall be very happy to come and dine with you."

"So be it then," said the duke, frankly. "Now, Valerie, my love, bid the count good-evening. It is time to go."

The young duchess arose wearily from the sofa, and slightly courtesied her adieux.

The count stood up and bowed with a profound reverence that seemed ironical to her sensitive mind.

The guests were now all taking leave of their host and hostess.

The Duke and Duchess of Hereward were among the last to go.

"I am very sorry that I brought you out this evening, love. I saw—indeed, every one saw, and could not help seeing—that this dinner-party has been a great trial to you. It will not bear an encore. You must have time to recover your cheerfulness, dearest, before you are again brought into a large company," said the duke, kindly, as soon as they were seated together in their carriage.

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"Did people attribute my dullness to—to—to——" began Valerie, by way of saying something, but her voice faltered and broke down.

"To your recent double bereavement?—certainly they did, my love. They knew

'No crowds
Make up for parents in their shrouds,'

and were not cruel enough to criticise your filial grief, my Valerie."

"I am glad of that; but I am very sorry you have invited the Count de Volaski to dinner to-morrow."

"Oh, why?"

"Because I do not like company."

"He is only one guest and will dine with us quietly. He will amuse you."

"No, he will not; he will bore me. I wish you would write and put him off."

"Impossible, my dear Valerie! What earthy excuse could I make for such an unpardonable piece of rudeness?"

"Tell him that I am ill, out of spirits, anything you like so that you tell him not to come."

"My dearest one, you certainly are ill and out of spirits, and very morbid besides. So much the more reason why you should be gently aroused and amused. Dinner parties weary and distress you; but the count's visit will relieve and amuse you."

"Oh! I *do* think I *ought* to know what is good for me and what I want better than any one else," exclaimed Valerie, speaking impatiently to the duke for the first time during their married life.

"But you don't, love; that is all. The count is com-

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ing to dine with us to-morrow. That is settled. Now, here we are at home," said the duke, as the carriage rolled through the massive archway and entered the court-yard of the magnificent Hotel de la Motte.

CHAPTE XIII

A GATHERING STORM

After a night of sleeplessness and anguish, Valerie arose to a day of duplicity and terror.

The anticipation of the evening was intolerable to her; the prospect of sitting down at her own table between the Duke of Hereward and the Count de Volaski overwhelmed her with a sense of horror and loathing.

Faint, pale and trembling, she descended to the breakfast-room, where she found the duke already awaiting her.

Shocked at her aspect, he hastened to meet her and lead her to an easy-chair on the right of the breakfast-table.

"You are not able to be out of your bed, Valerie. You should not have attempted to rise," he said, as he carefully seated her.

"I told you last night that I was very ill," she answered coldly, as she sank wearily back on the cushion.

"That infernal dinner party! It has prostrated you quite. I am so grieved; I will not suffer you to be so severely tried again!" said the duke, vehemently.

"And you will write this morning and put off the count's visit," pleaded Valerie.

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"No, my dear, I cannot," answered the duke, regretfully.

"Then I cannot come down to dinner. That is all," she said, sullenly closing her eyes.

"I shall be sorry for that; but we must do the best we can without you, for the count, having been invited, must be permitted to come."

She languidly drew up to the table, and touched the bell that summoned the footman with the breakfast-tray.

When it was placed upon the table, she poured out two cups of coffee, handed one to the duke, and took the other herself.

When she had drained it, she arose, excused herself, and went back to her own room.

She closed and locked the door, and threw herself upon the bed, groaning:

"Oh! how could Waldemar accept that invitation? How can he bear to sit down with me at the Duke of Hereward's table? Has he no delicacy? No pity? Ah, mercy, what a state is mine! And yet I was not to blame for *this!* I have not deserved it! I have not deserved it! One of us three must die; I, or Waldemar, or the Duke of Hereward; and I am the one; for *I hate myself* for the position I am in! I *hate,* LOATHE and utterly ABHOR myself! I do. I do. I wish the lightning would strike me dead! dead, before I have to meet one of them again!" she moaned, rolling and grovelling on the bed.

There came a soft rap at the door, followed by the kind voice of the duke, saying:

"Valerie, Valerie, my love! How are you? Do you want anything? May I come in?"

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"No! I want rest! I do not want you!" she answered, so sharply as to astonish the duke, who spoke again, however, deprecatingly and soothingly.

"Is there anything that I can do for you outside, then, my dear?"

"You can go away and let me alone, or you can stand there chattering until you drive me crazy!" she answered, ungratefully.

"Good-morning, my love; I will not trouble you again soon," muttered the duke, as he walked away from the duchess' door.

"I never knew such a change as this that has come over her. She is as cross as a catamount! There may be a cause for it. There may—I will send for a physician," he added, as he went downstairs.

Valerie kept her room all day.

Count de Volaski came to dinner at eight o'clock and was received by the duke alone.

He smiled grimly when his host apologized for the absence of the duchess, by explaining the delicate condition of her health since the death of her parents, and the injury she had received from the fatigue and excitement of the dinner-party on the preceding evening.

The duke and the count dined *tête-à-tête,* and sat long over their wine, although they drank but little. After dinner they played chess together all the evening, and then parted, apparently the best of friends on both sides, really good friends on the duke's.

The next morning a letter was handed Valerie, while she sat at breakfast with the duke.

She recognized the handwriting of Count de Volaski, and put it in her pocket to read when she was alone.

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The duke was not suspicious or inquisitive. He asked no questions.

As soon as the duchess found herself alone in her chamber, she locked the door to keep out intruders, and sat down and opened the letter.

Its contents were sufficiently startling. They were as follows:

RUSSIAN LEGATION, RUE ST. HONORE.

VALERIE:—You avoid me in vain! You cannot shake me off. I accepted the duke's invitation to dinner last evening for the sake of seeing you again, and for the chance of having a final explanation with you; but you kept away from the dinner. Such expedients will not avail you.

I write now to assure you that I must and will see you, to make an arrangement with you. I write openly, at the risk of having this letter fall into the hands of the duke; for I do not care if it does so fall. I would just as willingly say to him what I now say to you. I am quite willing to provoke a crisis. The present state of things maddens me. I wonder it does not *kill* you! When you married the Duke of Hereward within six months after my supposed death by the hands of your father, you acted cruelly, but not criminally; now that you know I am living, you must also know that every hour you continue to live under the roof of the Duke of Hereward you are a criminal. I do not require you to come to *me*. I do not wish to live with you again, although I love you; but I *do* require you to leave the Duke of Hereward and go away by yourself. I know you now, Valerie. You are as weak as water. You cannot go to the noble gentleman who has been so deeply

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deceived by you and your parents and tell him the secret that you have kept from him so long. You have not the moral courage to do so. But you can leave him. It is to arrange for your flight and for your future safety that I now demand and *insist* upon a private interview with you.

Write to me at the *poste-restante,* and tell me when and where I can see you alone. Should you refuse to grant me this interview, I will myself go to the Duke of Hereward and tell him the whole story. He may not resent your former marriage; but he will never forgive you, living, or your parents in their graves, for the deception that has been practiced upon him. I will wait twenty-four hours for your answer, and then if I fail to receive it, or fail to get a favorable one, I shall come immediately to the Hotel de la Motte and seek an explanation with the duke. I shall direct this letter by the name and title you now bear, so as to prevent mistakes; but it is the last time I shall so address you. And I sign myself, for all eternity,

Your true husband, WALDEMAR DE VOLASKI.

Valerie read the cruel letter to its close, then dropped it on her lap, and sank back in her chair, helpless, breathless, almost lifeless. Minutes crept into hours, and still she sat there in the same position, without motion, thought, or feeling—stricken, spell-bound, entranced.

She was aroused at length by a rap at her chamber-door.

She started, shuddering, to her feet, and spasm after spasm shook her galvanized frame, as she picked up her letter, found a match, drew it, set fire to the paper,

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threw it, blazing, upon the marble hearth, and watched it until it was consumed to a little heap of light ashes.

"There! That can never fall into the Duke of Hereward's hands *now!*" she said, with a bitter laugh.

Meanwhile the rapping continued.

"Well! well! well! well! Can't you be patient!" she exclaimed, very *im*patiently, as she tottered tremblingly across the room and opened the door.

Her dressing-maid, Mademoiselle Desiree, was there.

"*Pardonnez moi, madame;* but you ordered me to come to dress you for a drive at twelve. The clock has just struck, madame," said the girl, deprecatingly.

Valerie put her hand to her head in a bewildered way, and stared at the speaker a full minute before she could recollect herself sufficiently to reply.

"Yes—yes—yes—yes—I believe so. You can come in."

The girl entered and stood waiting for orders. Receiving none, she ventured to inquire:

"What dress shall madame wear?"

"My—my writing desk! Bring it here to me," answered the lady, as she sank into a chair and drew a little ivory stand before her.

"I wonder if madame indulges in absinthe in the morning?" was the secret thought of the discreet Mademoiselle Desiree, as she brought the elegant little malachite writing-desk, and placed it before her mistress.

Valerie opened it, took out a piece of note-paper and wrote:

"I cannot write much. I am stricken. I am dying. I hope you are right in what you say. Come here to-

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morrow at twelve, noon. I will give you the interview you seek."

This note was without date, address or signature, or any word to guide a strange reader to its true meaning. She put it into a sealed envelope, and directed it to *Count de Volaski, Poste Restante.*

Then she sat back in her chair, exhausted from the slight exertion.

The maid watched her mistress for a little while, and then said:

"Pardon, madame; but it is half-past twelve."

"Yes! I must dress," said Valerie, rising.

"What costume will madame wear?"

"Any. It does not signify."

The maid indulged in an imperceptible shrug of her shoulders, and laid out an elegant black rep silk, heavily trimmed with black crape and jet, with mantle, bonnet and veil to match.

"White or black gloves, madame?"

"Black, of course. It is not a wedding reception."

"Pardon, madame," said the girl; and she added the black gloves to the costume.

Valerie was soon dressed, and then the maid said:

"The carriage waits, madame."

Valerie took the note she had prepared and went downstairs, entered her barouche, and ordered the coachman to drive to the British Legation, Hotel Borghese, Rue Faubourg St. Honore.

When the carriage rolled through the archway into the courtyard, and drew up before the magnificent palace, interesting from having been built for and occupied by the beautiful Princess Pauline Bonaparte, Valerie

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alighted and handed her letter to the footman, with directions to go and post it while she was making her call.

The man knocked at the door for his mistress, and then hurried away to do her errand.

It was the conventional "dinner call" that brought Valerie to the Hotel Borghese.

An English footman admitted the visitor, conducted her to the private drawing-room of Lady C., and announced her.

Several other ladies, whom Valerie had met at the dinner party, were there on the same duty as herself.

Lady C. advanced from among them to receive the newcomer, kissed her on both cheeks, inquired affectionately after her health and then made her sit down in the most comfortable of the easy-chairs at hand.

After courteously saluting the ladies present, Valerie subsided into a dull silence, from which she could not arouse herself; but her voice was not missed, since every visitor seemed anxious to talk rather than listen, and therefore kept up a chattering that would have carried off the palm in a contest with a village sewing-circle or aviary full of excited magpies.

Valerie, the last to enter, was also the first to rise, but Lady C. detained her by a slight signal, and she sat down again, and relapsed into dullness and silence.

One by one the visitors arose and took leave, chattering to the very last.

As soon as the two ladies were left alone together, Lady C. took Valerie's hand, and gazing earnestly in her face, said:

"What is the matter with you, my child? You look pale and ill. Although I am so glad to see you, under

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any circumstances, I am half inclined to scold you for coming out at all."

For a moment Valerie felt inclined to open her oppressed and suffering heart to this sweet, matronly friend, and tell her the whole, bitter truth, and seek her wise counsel, but again the want of moral courage, which had always been so fatal to her welfare, sealed her lips.

"Well," said Lady C., after a short pause for that answer that never came, "I will not press the question. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.'"

"Yes," murmured Valerie, in a very low voice. Then, not to seem indifferent or unsocial, and also, if the truth must be told of her, to gratify a gnawing curiosity, she inquired:

"How goes the expected marriage of your niece, madame?"

"I cannot tell you, dear. I have been daily expecting some communication on the subject from de Volaski, but as yet he has made none. After coming to Paris for the purpose (for, of course, his office in the embassy is a mere sinecure and a plausible excuse), he betrays the bashfulness of a girl in pressing his suit; but some men, some of the best and purest of men, are just that way—in love affairs as shy women," said her ladyship.

Valerie smiled bitterly. She thought she understood the reason why the Count de Volaski was in no hurry to press the suit for marriage with a dreaming girl, to whom he had been arbitrarily contracted when he was a boy of fifteen, and she a child of twelve.

"I shall, however, write again to her father. I will not have my sister's daughter wasting her youth in a convent, while waiting for a tardy suitor."

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Valerie smiled again, and then arose to take her leave.

Lady C. kissed her affectionately, and promised soon to visit her at the Hotel de la Motte.

"But—how long will you remain there?" inquired her ladyship.

"I do not know. Until some business connected with my father's will shall be arranged, I think. We are there on sufferance only. My cousin, Louis, the present baron, wrote from Algiers, very kindly asking us to occupy the Hotel de la Motte at any time when business or pleasure should call us to Paris. The house was the home of my childhood, and I prefer to live in it as long as I may. The duke, though he would rather live at the *'Trois Freres,'* yields to my whim, and so we occupy the Hotel de la Motte, but I do not know for how long a time."

"Until you leave Paris, I presume?"

"Yes, probably," answered Valerie, as with another kiss, she took leave of her kind friend.

"Shall I ever see her sweet face, hear her sweet voice again?" murmured the young duchess, as she passed out to her carriage.

"You posted my letter?" she inquired of the footman who opened the carriage-door.

"Yes, your grace."

"That will do. Home."

The footman repeated the order to the coachman, who drove back to the Hotel de la Motte.

As Valerie entered her morning-room after laying off her bonnet and wrappings, she found the Duke of Hereward there, reading the papers.

He arose and placed a chair for her, saying kindly:

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"I hope your drive has done you good, dear; if it has not been so long as to fatigue you."

"I have only been to the Hotel Borghese to call on Lady C.," replied Valerie, sinking into the chair and leaning back.

"Now that I look well at you, I see that you are tired. A very little exertion seems to fatigue you now, Valerie. I do not understand your condition. It makes me anxious. I have asked Velpeau to call and see you. He will look in this afternoon."

"Thanks, you are very kind—too kind to me, as fretful and miserable as I am," replied Valerie, with a momentary compunction—only a momentary one, for the deep fear, horror and despair which had seized her soul left her little sensibility to comparative trifles.

"My poor child," said the duke, looking compassionately on her pale, worn face, "do you not know that I can make all allowance for you? You are suffering very much. I hope Velpeau will be able to do something for you. You know he stands at the head of the medical profession in Paris, which is as much as to say, in the world."

"Yes, I know," said Valerie, indifferently. Then, with sudden earnestness, she exclaimed: "I wish *you* would do something for me."

"Why, my poor girl, I would do anything in the world for you. Tell me what you want me to do."

"I know you cannot leave Paris now, and so you cannot, yourself, take me to England; but I wish to go there; I wish you to send me there to Hereward Hold, where we passed so many peaceful months."

"To send you there *alone*, Valerie?" inquired the duke, in surprise.

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"No, but with my personal attendants, and with any discreet old lady you may choose to appoint as my companion, if, like an old Spanish husband, you think your young wife may require watching when she is out of your sight," she added, with a relapse into her irritable mood.

"Valerie! you wrong me and yourself by such a thought," said the duke, gravely.

"I know I do, and I know I am a wretch! but I want to go to England. I want to get away from everybody, and be by myself. You promised to do what I wanted done. That is what I want done."

"Do you wish 'to get away' from *me,* Valerie?"

"Yes, from you and from *everybody,* except from my servants, who are not my companions, and therefore don't bore me."

"It must be as I thought," said the duke to himself; "all this eccentricity, this nervous irritability has a natural cause, and not an alarming one, and it must be humored."

"Will you keep your promise?" she testily inquired.

"Certainly, my dear child. Anything to please you. You will see Velpeau this afternoon. If after consulting him you still think it necessary to leave Paris for Hereward Hold, I will send you there under proper protection. By the by, you succeed very well in getting away from your friends, I think. The count de Volaski called here while you were away this forenoon. He seemed disappointed in not seeing you. He looks ill. I never saw a man change so within the last few days. I should not wonder if he were on the very verge of a bad fever. I wish you had seen him. He was quite a friend of yours in St. Petersburg, I believe."

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"I used to see him every day in the public assemblies to which we were always going. I wish you wouldn't talk about him," gasped Valerie, with a nervous shudder, as she arose and left the room.

"What a little misanthrope she has grown to be; but it is only a temporary affliction. She will get over it in a few weeks," said the duke to himself, as he resumed the reading of his newspaper.

The next day Valerie arose at her usual hour, and breakfasted *tête-à-tête* with the duke. She knew that this day must decide her fate, and she tried to nerve herself to bear all that it might bring her, even as the frailest women sometimes brace themselves to bear torture and death.

At eleven in the forenoon, the duke left the house to go to the Hotel de Ville to keep an appointment that would detain him until three in the afternoon.

Valerie knew all about this appointment, and had therefore fixed the hour of noon as the safest time for her interview with the count.

Twelve o'clock, therefore, found her dressed in her deepest mourning, and seated in her private drawing-room, awaiting the advent of her most dreaded visitor, Waldemar de Volaski.

CHAPTER XIV

A SENTENCE OF BANISHMENT

Valerie, in an agony of terror, waited for her expected visitor.

Did she love him, then?

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Ah, no! Horror at the position in which she found herself so filled her soul as to leave no room for any softer emotion. She loved no one in the world, not even herself; she wished for nothing on earth but death, and only her religious faith, or her superstitious fears, restrained her from laying sacrilegious hands upon her own life.

While watching for her dreaded guest she bitterly communed with herself.

"No one ever really loved me," she moaned. "Every one connected with me loved only himself, or herself, and sacrificed me. My father and my mother cared only for themselves and their own ambitions, and so they immolated me, their only child, to their gratification; my suitors loved only themselves and their passions, and immolated me! And I—I love no one and hate myself! hate the creature they have all combined to make me! If it were not for that which comes after death I would not exist an hour longer—I would die!"

As she muttered this the little ormolu clock on the mantelpiece struck twelve.

"The hour has come. He will be here in another moment! Oh, why could he not leave me in peace? Oh, what shall I do?" she exclaimed, in her excitement rising from her seat and beginning to pace up and down the room with wild, disordered steps.

Sometimes she stopped to listen, but without hearing any sound that might herald the approach of a visitor; then resumed her wild and purposeless walk, until the clock struck the quarter, when she suddenly threw herself down in the chair, muttering:

"Fifteen minutes late! I do not want to see him!

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But since he is to come, I wish he had come, and this was all over."

Another quarter of an hour passed, and her visitor had not arrived.

Again in her anxiety she arose and began to walk the floor and to look out occasionally at a window which commanded the approach to the house.

No one, however, was in sight.

She sat down again, muttering:

"This seems an intentional affront, an insult. He treats me with no consideration. Well, perhaps I deserve none. Oh! I wish I knew to whom my duty is due! I wish I had some one of whom I dared to ask counsel! I certainly did wed Waldemar. I certainly did believe him to be my lawful husband, and *then* my duty was clearly due to him. But my parents came and tore me away from him, and told me that my marriage was not lawful, and that Waldemar de Volaski was not my husband. Then they took me to Paris, and told me that I must forget the very existence of my lover. Still, I should never have dreamed of another marriage while I thought Waldemar lived; for I loved him with all my heart, and only wished to live until I should be of an age to contract a legal marriage with him, with whom I had already made a sacramental one. But they told me that Waldemar was *dead,* slain by the hand of my father! and they bade me keep the secret of my first marriage, and to contract a second one with the Duke of Hereward! Oh, if I had but known that Waldemar still lived, the tortures of the Inquisition should not have forced me into this second marriage! But believing Waldemar to be dead, I suffered myself to be persecuted, worried and *weakened* into this marriage! Oh!

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that I had been strong enough to bear the miseries of my home; to resist the forces brought to bear against me! Oh, that I had been brave enough to tell the whole truth of my marriage with Waldemar de Volaski to the Duke of Hereward before he had committed his honor to my keeping by making me his wife! That course would have saved me then with less of suffering than I have to bear now. But I weakly permitted myself to be forced, with this secret on my conscience, into a marriage with the Duke of Hereward. And now I dare not tell him the truth! And now my first husband has come back and hates me for my inconstancy, and my second husband knows nothing about it! Now to whom do I rightly belong! To whom do I owe duty? To Waldemar? To the duke? Who knows? Not I! One thing only is clear to me, that I must not live with either of them as a wife, henceforth! Heaven forgive those who forced me into this position, for I fear that I never can do so!"

While these wild and bitter thoughts were passing through her tortured mind the clock struck one and startled her from her reverie.

"Ah! something has prevented his coming," she said to herself, as she once more looked out of the window. Then she relapsed into her sad reverie.

"I can never, never be happy in this world again—never! But if I only knew my duty I would do it. I don't know it. I only know that I must go clear away from both these——" She shuddered and left the sentence incomplete even in her thoughts.

Just then a footman entered with a note upon a little silver tray.

She took it languidly, but all her languor vanished as

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she recognized the handwriting of Waldemar de Volaski.

"Who brought this?" she inquired of the servant.

"Un garcon from the Hotel de Russe, madame."

"Is he waiting for an answer?"

"Oui, madame."

She had asked these questions partly to procrastinate the opening of the note she dreaded to read. Now slowly and sadly she drew it from its envelope, unfolded and read:

HOTEL DE RUSSE, Tuesday Morning.

UNFAITHFUL WIFE:—An engagement at the Tuileries, for the very hour you named, prevents me from meeting you at your appointed time. Write by the messenger who brings this, and tell me when you can see me.

Your wronged husband, VOLASKI.

While reading this, she shivered as with an ague. When she had finished she crushed it up in her hand and put it in her pocket with the intention of destroying it on the first opportunity.

Then she went to a little ornamental writing desk that stood in the corner of the room, and took a pencil and a sheet of note paper and wrote these words, without date or signature:

"I was ready to see you this noon. I cannot at this instant tell at what hour I can be certain to be alone; but will find out and let you know in the course of this day."

She placed this note in an envelope, sealed it with a

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plain seal, and sent it down by the footman to Count Waldemar's messenger.

Then she hurried up to her own bedchamber, rang for her maid, changed her dress for a white wrapper, and threw herself down, exhausted, upon a lounge.

She was almost fainting.

"This must be something like death! Oh, if it were only death!" she sighed, as she closed her eyes.

An hour later she was found here by the Duke of Hereward, who showed no surprise at finding her reclining there, but only said that Doctor Velpeau was below stairs and would like to see her.

"Let him come up, then," coldly answered Valerie.

And the duke himself went to conduct the physician to his patient.

He left them together for an hour, at the end of which Doctor Velpeau came down and reported to the anxious husband that his wife was not seriously out of health; that her malady was more of the mind than the body, and that amusement and society would be her best medicines.

"Just what I cannot prevail on her to take," said the duke, with an impatient shrug. "She will go nowhere, will see nobody; but shuts herself up and mopes. Now, to-day, I have received intelligence concerning the rather intricately embarrassed affairs of the late Baron de la Motte, which will oblige me to start for Algiers, for a personal interview with his heir-at-law, an officer in the Chasseurs d'Afrique, who cannot get leave of absence to come to me. Now the question is, Doctor, shall I take the duchess with me, or leave her here? Is she well enough to be left, or strong enough to travel?"

"Both! She is both. I assure you she is not at all

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ill in body. Put the question to herself. If she should be willing to go, take her. The trip will do her good. If she prefers to stay, leave her. She is in no danger of illness or death."

"But I should be gone, probably, a fortnight. Could I, with safety to herself, take her so far away, for so long a time, from the best medical advice? or could I, on the other hand, leave her here for so distant a bourne and so long an absence?"

"With perfect safety; barring, of course, the human possibilities to which even the most fortunate, the most healthful and the best-guarded among us are more or less subject. But again I counsel you to leave it to the duchess, whether she shall remain here or accompany you to Algiers. She is equally fit for either plan," said the great physician, as he drew on his gloves.

"I will take the duchess with me, if she will go. If not, I will leave her under your charge, Doctor," said the duke.

"Much honored, I am sure, in attending her grace," replied the French physician, with the extravagant politeness of his countrymen.

As soon as Doctor Velpeau had gone, the Duke of Hereward went upstairs to see his wife, and, sitting by the lounge on which she still reclined, he told her of the urgent business that required his immediate departure for Algiers.

"Algiers! Why, that is in Africa! another quarter of the globe! a long, long way off!" she exclaimed, starting up with an eagerness that the duke mistook for alarm and distress.

"Oh, no, dear, it is not. It only *sounds* so. It is about eight hundred miles nearly due south of Paris.

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We go by train to Marseilles in a few hours, and by steamer to Algiers in a couple of days. You will go with me, dear. The change will do you good," said the duke, gayly.

"I! Oh, no, I could not think of such a thing! Pray, pray, do not ask me to do so!" exclaimed Valerie, in a tone of such genuine terror that the duke hastened to say:

"Certainly not, if you do not wish it, my love. I should be happier to have you with me, and I think the trip would benefit your health, but——"

"Did that horrid doctor advise you to take me to Algiers?" testily interrupted the young duchess.

"He said the change would do you good if you should like to go; but not otherwise. He said that you should be left to decide for yourself."

"Then he has quite as much judgment as the world gives him credit for, and that is not the case with every one."

"Now you are left to your own choice, to go or not to go."

"Then I choose not to go, most decidedly."

"Very well," said the duke, with a disappointed air; "then there is no need that I should delay my departure for another day. I shall leave for Marseilles by the night's express, Valerie."

"As you please," she wearily replied.

"I may be gone a fortnight, Valerie, and I may not be gone more than ten days; the length of my absence will depend upon contingencies; but I shall hurry back with all possible dispatch."

"Yes, I am sure you will," she answered, because she did not know what else to say.

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"And I will write to you every day."

"Thank you."

"Will you write to me every day?"

"Certainly, if you wish me to do so."

"Of course I wish you to do so, my love," said the duke, as he stooped and pressed his lips on the pale cheek of his "wayward child," as he sometimes called her.

He then left the room to give orders to his valet and groom to pack up and be ready to attend him on his journey.

As soon as she found herself alone, Valerie arose, slipped on a dressing-gown, sat down to her writing-desk, and wrote the following note, as usual, without name, date or signature:

"Come to me at noon to-morrow; or, if you cannot do so, write and fix your own hour, any time will suit me equally well, or rather, *ill.*"

She put this note in an envelope, sealed it, and directed it to Monsieur Le Count de Volaski, Russian Embassy.

Then she rang for her maid, and sent her out to post the letter.

Valerie made an effort to dress for dinner that evening and dined with the duke for the last time—yes, for the very last time in this world.

After the Duke had risen from the table and pressed a parting kiss upon her lips before leaving her to enter the carriage that was to take him to the railway station, she never saw his face again—nay, more—though she

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honored and revered him, she never even wished or intended to see him again.

She witnessed his departure with tearful eyes, yet with a sense of infinite relief. *One of them was gone!* Oh, how she wished that the other would go also!

She loved neither of them. She had lost the power of loving. Her love, by her awful position, was frightened into its death-throes. All she desired to do, was to get away from them both, and like a hunted hare, or wounded bird, creep into some safe hiding-place to die in peace.

She retired early that evening, and, for the first time for several days, slept in peace.

The next day she arose, and, contrary to her custom in the morning, dressed herself to receive company.

She waited all the forenoon in expectation of receiving a note from the Count de Volaski, either accepting her appointment or arranging another one; but when the clock struck the hour of noon without her having heard from him, she naturally concluded that he meant to answer her note in person, by coming at the hour named. So she went down into the small drawing-room to be ready to receive him.

She was right in her conclusions; for she had scarcely been seated five minutes when a footman entered and presented the count's card.

"Show the gentleman up," she said, in a voice that she vainly tried to render steady.

A few minutes passed, the door opened, and Count de Volaski entered the room.

She arose to receive him, but did not advance a single step to meet him.

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He came on, and bowed low—much lower than any ceremony required.

She bent her head, and silently pointed to a chair at a short distance.

He sat down.

Up to this time not a word had passed between them.

A monk and a nun, who keep their vows, could not have met more coldly than this pair who had once plighted their hands and hearts in marriage before the altar of the Church of St. Marie.

Valerie was the first to speak.

"Well, you insisted upon this interview. Now you have it. What do you want of me?"

"I want you to leave the Duke of Hereward," he answered, sternly.

"You are right, so far. But the Duke of Hereward has saved me the trouble of taking the initiative step. He has left me. I shall never see him more."

"How! What!" exclaimed de Volaski, starting up.

"The Duke of Hereward left for Algiers last night. I shall not remain here to receive him when he returns."

"You told him, then, and he has left you? Good!"

"No, I have not told him; he knows nothing—not even that he has left me forever. Business of a financial nature connected with his duties as executor of my father's estates, takes him to Algiers for a few weeks. During his absence I shall make arrangements for leaving this house forever."

"Valerie, where will you go?" he inquired, in a more softened tone.

"I do not know—*not with you, that is certain.* You were quite right when you said that I could not live with either—that a single life was the only possible one

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for me. I feel that it is so, and I hope that it will be a short one."

"Valerie, do not say so. You are very young yet. The duke is an elderly man; he will die and leave you free."

"I shall not be free *while* EITHER *of you live!* nor can I build any hope in life *on death!* Oh! I have been cruelly wronged, and I am very miserable, but I am not selfish or wicked, Waldemar."

"How soon do you propose to leave this house?"

"I do not know. I only know that I must go before the duke's return."

"What should hinder your going at once?"

"I must make some provision for the miserable remnant of life left me. I must collect and sell my jewels and my shawls and laces, and invest the money in some safe place, where it will bring me interest enough to live cheaply in some remote country neighborhood. Wretched as I am, soon as I hope to die, I do not wish to be dependent on *you,* Waldemar."

"No, nor do I wish anything but independence and honor for *you,* Valerie. But you must let me assist you in realizing capital from your personal property, and in making other necessary arrangements for your removal. You cannot do this for yourself. You are more ignorant of the world than a child. So you must let me see you safely through this trial. You have no alternative, Valerie. You have no one else to consult with but me, and you may confide in me, for I will endeavor to forget that I ever called you wife, and will treat you with the reverential tenderness due to a dear sister. When I once have seen you safely lodged in a secure retrat, I will leave you there, never to intrude upon you again."

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"Thanks! thanks! that is the kindest course you could pursue toward me."

"You accept all my service then?"

"Yes, on the condition that I shall seem to you only as a sister. But, oh! Waldemar! you, who are so kind and considerate *now*, how could you have *ever* written to me so cruelly—calling me an unfaithful wife—calling yourself a wronged husband? I never was consciously unfaithful to any one in my life. I never voluntarily wronged any creature since I was born. How could you have written so cruelly, Waldemar?"

"Forgive me, Valerie! I was crazed with the contemplation of you—*you* whom I considered as my own wife, living here as the Duchess of Hereward. Only since I have learned that the duke is gone—and gone forever from you, have I come to my senses. Do you understand me, and do you forgive me?"

"Yes, both; but now, do not think me rude or unkind; but you must go. It is not well that you should stay too long."

"Good-morning, Valerie," he said, immediately preparing to obey her.

She held out her hand. He took it, pressed it lightly, dropped it, turned and left the room.

After this day the Count de Volaski came daily to the Hotel de la Motte on some errand connected with the duchess' financial business. These interviews were as coldly formal as the most severe etiquette would have required.

Valerie received frequent letters from the Duke of Hereward, in which he spoke of the protracted business that still kept him an unwilling absentee from her side;

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promised as speedy a return as possible; expressed great anxiety concerning her health, and besought her to write often.

She complied with his request: she wrote daily as she had promised to do, but she could not write deceitfully; she told him of her health, which she described as no better and no worse than it had been when he left Paris; she told him any little political news or rumor that happened to be stirring, and any social gossip that she thought might interest or amuse him; but she deluded him by no expressions of affection or devotion.

The duke's absence, that was expected to last but two weeks, was prolonged to six.

Still Valerie delayed leaving the Hotel de la Motte. She shrank from taking the final step, until it should seem absolutely necessary.

At length, after an absence of nearly seven weeks, the Duke of Hereward wrote to his young wife that he was about to return home, and would follow his letter in twenty-four hours.

This letter threw her into a state of excessive nervous excitement, and when her daily visitor entered her room a few hours after its reception, he found her in this condition.

"Why, what is the matter, Valerie? What on earth has happened?" he inquired, in much anxiety.

"The hour has come! I must go!" she answered, trembling.

"Well, so much the better. You are ready to go. You have been ready for weeks past! Do not falter now that the time is at hand."

"I do not falter in resolution, only in strength."

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"The sooner it is over the better. I will take you away this afternoon, if you wish."

"Yes, yes, take me away as soon as possible!"

"Have you thought of where you would like to go first?"

"Yes! I have thought and decided! I want you to take me to Italy—to St. Vito, where we were married, and to the vine-dresser's cottage, in the Apennines, where we passed the first days of our marriage, and the happiest days of our lives."

"It will be very sad for you there," said Waldemar, compassionately.

"Yes! I know it will be so without you! for of course I must live without you! and though I do not love you as I used to do, because love has perished out of my soul, still, I know, there in that place where we were so happy in our honeymoon, I shall be always comparing the happy days that *were* with the sorrowful days that *are!*"

"But still, if that is so, why do you go there?"

"Oh, Waldemar, it is the only place for me! I cannot go among entire strangers. I am such a coward. I am afraid in my loneliness. I should be driven to despair or to insanity, or worse than all, to the unpardonable sin of suicide! I dare not go among strangers, nor dare I go among people who know me as the Duchess of Hereward, or knew me as Valerie de la Motte, for they would scorn and abhor me, and their company would be far worse than the very worst solitude. No! I must go to the vine-dresser's cottage in the Apennines. Good Beppo and Lena knew me only as your wife and loved me dearly, and wept bitter tears when my father tore me away from you. They will be glad to see poor

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Valerie again! And the good Father Antonio, who married us! He loved us both! He will comfort and counsel me. Yes, Waldemar! St. Vito is my City of Refuge, and the vine-dresser's cottage my only possible home. Take me there and leave me in peace."

"I believe you are right, Valerie. By what train would you like to leave Paris? There is an express that starts at seven. Could you be ready for that?"

"Yes! yes! thanks! I can be ready for that!"

"Shall you take your maid with you?"

"No. I shall pay her and discharge her with a present."

"Then I shall have to secure only two seats. I will get a coupé, if it be possible."

"Anything you like! Go now, Waldemar!"

Count de Volaski pressed her hand and withdrew; but before leaving the room he turned back and inquired:

"Shall I come here for you, or shall I meet you at the station?"

"Meet me at the station, of course! Spare my poor name as long as it can be spared! In twenty-four hours it will be in everybody's mouth, and the worst that can be said of it will seem too good! And yet they will all be wrong, and I shall not deserve their condemnation."

Count de Volaski waved his hand, and hurried from the room and the house, for he had many hasty preparations to make for the sudden journey.

As soon as he had gone Valerie set about making her final arrangements. She paid off her maid and discharged her with a handsome present, but without a word of explanation. She sent off her luggage to the railway station, and ordered the carriage to take her to

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the same point. She took in her hand a small bag containing her money, jewels, and other small valuables, when she seated herself in her carriage and gave the order to her coachman. And so she left her own magnificent home forever.

The wondering servants, who had been too well trained even to look any comment in their mistress' hearing, let loose their tongues as they watched the carriage roll away.

CHAPTER XV

THE STORM BURSTS

The Duke of Hereward arrived at home the next morning. When the fiarcre that brought him from the railway station rolled through the porte-cochere into the courtyard and drew up before the main entrance of the Hotel de la Motte, he sprang out with almost boyish eagerness, and ran up the stairs, and rang and knocked with vehemence and impatience.

The gray-haired porter opened the door.

"How is the duchess, Leblanc? Has she risen? Send some one to let her know that I have arrived," he exclaimed, hurriedly.

"*Helas!* Monseigneur!" answered the venerable old servant, in a distressed tone.

"What do you mean? Is the duchess ill? I got a letter from her yesterday, in which she said she was quite well. It met me at Marseilles. She continues well, I hope? Why don't you speak?" impatiently demanded the duke.

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"*Mille pardons,* Monseigneur; but madame has gone," sadly replied Leblanc.

"What do you say?" exclaimed the duke, discrediting the evidence of his own ears.

"*Mille pardons,* Monsieur le Duc, Madame la Duchesse has gone."

"Gone! the duchess gone!" exclaimed the duke, in amazement, not unmixed with incredulity.

"Oui, Monseigneur."

"Gone! the duchess gone! Where?"

"*Miserable* that I am, Monseigneur, I do not know. I cannot tell. Will Monsieur le Duc deign to consult the coachman who drove Madame la Duchesse in the carriage when she left the house last night, not to return? He can probably give Monseigneur some information," respectfully suggested the old porter.

"Send Dubourg to me in the library, then," said the duke, as he strode down the hall, full of vague alarm, but far from suspecting the fatal truth.

Soon the coachman came to him in the library, and in answer to his questions told how he had driven the duchess alone to the railway station to catch the night express for Marseilles.

"The night express for Marseilles! Then the foolish child was going to meet me, and must have passed me on the road!" said the duke to himself, with a strange blending of flattered affection and anxious fears.

"That will do, Dubourg. The duchess went down to the seaport to meet me on the steamer, and we have missed each other on the road. It is a pity, but it cannot be helped!" said the duke, dismissing his coachman by a wave of his hand.

The man bowed and retired.

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"Silly child, to go and do such an absurd and indiscreet thing as that! I would go down after her by the next train only I should be sure to pass her on the road again; for she will hasten immediately back when she finds that I have arrived at Marseilles and left for Paris," said the duke to himself, as he rang for his valet and retired to his own room to dress for breakfast.

But there, on the bureau, he found a letter addressed to him in the handwriting of Valerie.

At the moment he picked it up his valet entered the room in answer to his ring.

Some intuition warned the duke to send the man away while he should read his letter.

"Have a warm bath ready for me at nine o'clock, Dubois, and order breakfast at half-past," he said.

The man bowed and left the room.

The duke dropped into a chair, and with a strange, vague foreboding of evil, opened the letter.

Well might he shrink from the dread perusal of the story—the story of her cowardice and folly, and of his own humiliation and despair.

It was Valerie's full confession, the revelation of her woful history as it is known to the reader, with one single reservation—the name of her lover.

The Duke of Hereward had wonderful powers of self-control. He read the fatal letter through to the bitter end. Then he folded it up carefully, and locked it up in a cabinet for safe-keeping.

And when, fifteen minutes later, his valet came to tell him that it was nine o'clock, and his bath was ready, no one could have guessed from his looks that a storm had passed through his soul.

He was rather pale, certainly; but that might well be

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explained by the fatigue of a long night's journey, and his gray mustache and beard concealed the close compression of his lips. He went through his morning toilet and his breakfast with apparently his usual composure.

After breakfast, however, he instituted a cautious but close investigation of the circumstances attending the flight of the duchess.

The servants, having nothing to gain from concealment and nothing to fear from communication, spoke freely of the daily visits of the Count de Volaski, continued through the seven weeks of the duke's absence.

Then the dreadful light of conviction burst full upon his startled intelligence. Count Waldemar de Volaski had been her acquaintance at the Court of St. Petersburg! He it was, then, who had been the hero of her foolish love story and mad marriage, before the duke had ever seen her. He it was who had been her constant visitor during the duke's absence. He it was who was the companion of her flight!

The duke did not believe Valerie's solemn declaration, that she left Paris only to isolate herself from every one and live a single, lonely life. Valerie had deceived him once, by keeping a fatal secret from him, and he would not trust her now. He believed that she had gone away with the Russian count to remain with him. The duke's rage and jealousy were roused and burning against them both.

He was determined to find out the place of their retreat, and to take immediate and signal vengeance.

He put the case in the hands of the most expert detectives, with instructions to use the utmost caution and secrecy in their investigations.

He permitted his first theory of the duchess' absence,

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made in good faith at the time it was first stated—that she had gone down to Marseilles to meet him, and had missed him on the way—to prevail in the household, and penetrate through that medium to the world of Paris.

He left the Hotel de la Motte, which he had only occupied in right of his wife's family, and saying that he should not return until the arrival of the duchess, he took up his residence at *"Meurice's."*

He shut himself up in his apartments, and never left them. He refused to see all visitors except the detectives in his employment. Thus he escaped the annoyance of having to answer questions and to make explanations.

He had remained at *"Meurice's"* about five days, when Villeponte, the chief detective, came to him and told him that they had succeeded in making out the facts connected with the flight of the duchess.

The duke, controlling all manifestations of excitement, directed the officer to proceed with the story at once.

Villeponte then related that on the Wednesday of the preceding week, madame, the Duchess of Hereward, had left Paris in company with Monsieur the Count de Volaski; that they took a coupé on the evening express for Marseilles, traveling alone together, without servants or attendants; that they were now domiciliated at a vine-dresser's cottage in the little village of San Vito, at the foot of the Appenines.

Having concluded his information, Monsieur Villeponte asked for further instructions.

The duke told the detective that he had no further orders to give; but thanked him for his zeal, congratu-

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lated him on his success, paid him liberally, and bowed him out.

That evening the Duke of Hereward, unattended by groom or valet, took a coupé on the night express train for the south of France, and started for Marseilles, en route for Italy.

On the evening of the third day after leaving Paris he reached his destination—the little hamlet of San Vito at the foot of the Appenines.

He stopped at the small hotel.

Coming alone and unattended, carrying a small valise in his hand, and looking weary, dusty, and travel-stained, the Duke of Hereward was not intuitively recognized as a person of distinction, and therefore escaped the overwhelming amount of attention usually lavished upon English tourists of rank and wealth by continental hosts.

He was shown to a little room blinded by clustering vines, and there left to his own devices.

He ordered a bottle of the native wine, and sent for the landlord.

The latter came promptly—a thin, little, old man, with a skin like parchment, hair and beard like a black horse's mane, and eyes like glow-worms.

He saluted the shabby stranger with courtesy, but without obsequiousness; for how should he know that the traveler was a duke?

"Pray sit down. I wish to ask you some questions," said the Duke of Hereward, with a natural, courteous dignity that immediately modified the landlord's estimate of his value.

"Non, signor,; but I will answer questions," he de-

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clared, as he bowed deferentially, and remained standing.

"Did a gentleman and lady arrive here about ten days ago!"

"Si, signor—a grand milord and a beautiful miladi. But they have been here before, signor, about two years ago."

"Ah! Where are they now?"

"At their old lodgings, signor—at the cottage of Beppo, the vine-dresser. The signor is a good friend of the young milord and miladi?" questioned the landlord, deferentially, but very anxiously; for just then it flashed upon his memory that two years previous another grand "signor," of reverend age like this one, had come inquiring about the young pair, and had ended in breaking up their union for the time.

"I have known the lady for about a year, or a little longer; the gentleman only a few months; but I can scarcely lay claim to so intimate a relation to them as 'friendship' would imply," answered the duke, evasively, and putting a severe constraint upon himself.

The landlord was completely deceived and thrown off his guard.

"How far from the village does this vine-dresser live?" inquired the duke.

"Just on the outside, signor—just at the foot of the mountain—about three miles from this house."

"Can I have a carriage to take me there this evening."

"Si, signor, assuredly; but will not the signor refresh himself before he leaves?" inquired the host.

"No; I will refresh myself after I come back. Let me have the carriage as soon as possible."

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"Si, signor," said the landlord, bowing himself out.

The duke, unable to rest, eveu after a long and fatiguing journey, walked up and down the floor of his little room, until the land lord reappeared and announced the carriage.

The duke caught up his rough traveling-cap, clapped it on his head, hurried out and entered the rustic vehicle, dignified with the name of a carriage.

And in another moment he was rolling off in the direction of the vinedresser's cottage at the foot of the mountain.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RIVALS

The sun was setting behind the western ridge, and throwing a deep shadow over the valley, as the rustic vehicle conveying the Duke of Hereward drew up before the vinedresser's cottage, nestled almost out of sight amid thick foliage and deep shade.

It was the hour of rest, and Beppo, the vinedresser, sat at the gate, strumming an old, dilapidated lute; his red jacket and white shirt making the only bits of bright color in the sombre picture.

As the rude carriage stopped before the gate, Beppo arose and put aside his lute, and stood with a look of expectancy on his dark face.

The duke did not alight, but put his head out of the carriage window and beckoned the man to approach him.

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Beppo came up, curiosity expressing itself in every feature of his speaking countenance.

"You have a young gentleman and lady—a young married couple—staying with you?" said the duke, but speaking in the Italian language.

"No, Excellenzo. The signora is here. The signor went away on the same day on which he brought the signora," deferentially answered the peasant, with a profound bow.

"The man has gone!" exclaimed the duke, losing his caution and his politeness in the frenzy of baffled vengeance.

"Si, signor, the man has gone!" with another deep bow.

"Where, then, has he gone?"

"To Paris, signor; but the signora is still here. Will the signor deign to come into my poor house and see the signora, then?"

"See *her!* No!" vehemently exclaimed the duke. Then recollecting himself, he inquired:

"Are you sure the man has gone to Paris?"

"Si, signor; I drove him myself, in my little cart, to San Stephano, where he took the train."

"You say that he left on the same day in which he brought the lady here?" inquired the duke, with more interest.

"Si, signor. They arrived in the afternoon and he went away again in the evening."

"Hum! Why did he go so soon?"

"Affairs, signor. It is not to be thought he would have left the signora so sick if it had not been for affairs."

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"The lady is sick, then?"

"Very sick, signor."

"What is the matter with her?"

"We do not know, signor. She will not have a doctor, but sits and pines."

"Ah! no doubt," said the duke to himself.

"Will the signor condescend to honor our poor shed by coming under its roof, where he may for himself see the signora?" said the vinedresser, with much courtesy.

"Thanks, no. Back to the hotel!" he added, to the driver, who immediately turned his horse's head to the village.

With a parting nod to the courteous vinedresser, the duke sank back on his seat, closed his eyes, and gave his mind up to thought.

Volaski had gone back to Paris. Why had he left Valerie and gone there? To resign his position in the embassy? To settle up business previous to taking up his permanent abode in Italy? Or had he returned so quickly to Paris only to conceal his crime and deceive the world into the opinion that he had not been out of Paris?

The duke did not know what his motive for so sudden a return could be; but judged the last-mentioned theory of causes to be the most probable.

"I do not know what *else* the caitiff has gone back for; but I know one thing—he has gone there to give me satisfaction," said the duke, grimly, to himself.

The horse, with the prospect of stall and fodder before him, made much better time in going home than in coming away, and so, in less than half an hour, the rumbling vehicle drew up before the little hotel.

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The landlord himself came out to meet the returning traveler.

"I hope the illustrious signor found the excellent signor and the beautiful signora in good health," said the polite host, as he opened the carriage-door for his guest.

"The beautiful signora is sick and the excellent signor is gone," said the duke, grimly, as he got out.

"*Misericordia!*" cried the host, with a look of unutterable woe.

"That will do. Now let me have some supper as soon as you can get it, and when it is ready to be served, come yourself and tell me why I was not informed of the young man's departure before taking that useless drive to the vinedresser's," said the duke, gravely.

"Pardon, illustrissimo, if I tell you now. We did not know the young signor had gone. He did not come this way. He must have taken another route and got his train at San Stephano," humbly replied the host.

"Ah! yes! the vinedresser did tell me he had driven the man over to San Stephano. Well, then, hurry up my supper," said the duke, passing on to his room.

The landlord looked after him, muttering to himself:

"Ah! so not finding the excellent young signor, he has turned his back on the beautiful young signora. I know it! The *other* ancient and illustrious signor, who raised the devil in Beppo's cottage last year, and carried off the bride, was her father; but this illustrissimo is *his* father, wherefore he cares not to bring away the lovely signora."

The host then gave the necessary orders for the duke's supper to be prepared, and when it was ready he took it up to his guest.

The duke had no more questions to ask, and only two

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orders to give—breakfast at seven o'clock on the next morning, and a conveyance to take him to the railway station at half-past seven.

The next day the duke set out on his return to Paris, and on the fourth evening thereafter found himself re-established at his comfortable quarters at Meurice's.

He changed his dress, dined, and ordered the files of English and French newspapers for the past week to be brought to him.

He was interested only in political affairs when asking for the papers, and so he was quite as much astonished as grieved when his eyes fell upon this paragraph in the *Times:*

"A painful rumor reaches us from Paris. It is to the effect that a certain young and lovely duchess, who made her *début* in English society as a bride only twelve months since, has left her home under the protection of a certain Polish count, attached to the Russian Embassy."

Stricken to the soul with shame, the unhappy duke sank back in his chair and remained as one paralyzed for several minutes; then slowly recovering himself he took up other papers, one by one, to see if they, too, recorded his dishonor.

Yes! each paper had its paragraph devoted to the one grand sensation of the day—the flight of the beautiful Duchess of Hereward with the young Russian count; and very few dealt with the deplorable case as delicately as the *Times* had done.

"So my dishonor is the talk of all Paris and London!" groaned the duke, dropping his head upon his

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chest. "If all the civilization of the nineteenth century had power to stay my arm in its vengeance, it has lost it now! And nothing is left for me to do but to kill the man and divorce the woman."

There was a certain Colonel Morris, of the Tenth Hussars, staying at Paris on leave.

The duke sat down at his writing-table and dashed off a hasty note to this compatriot, asking him to come to him immediately.

Then he rang the bell and gave the note to his own groom, saying:

"Take this to Colonel Morris, at the *Trois Freres,* and wait an answer."

The man took the message, bowed and hurried away.

The duke sank back in his chair with a deep sigh, and covered his face with his hands, and so awaited the return of his messenger.

Half an hour crept slowly by, and then the groom came back, opened the door, and announced:

"Colonel Morris."

The gallant colonel entered the room, looking as little like the dead shot and notorious duellist he was reported to be, as any fine gentleman could.

He was a tall, slight, fair and refined-looking young man, exquisite in dress, soft in speech, and suave in manners.

"You have guessed the reason why I have sent for you, Morris?" said the duke, advancing to meet him, and plunging into the middle of his subject.

"Yes," murmured the colonel, sinking into the seat his host silently offered him.

"You can go, Tompkins. I will ring when I want

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you," said the duke, throwing himself into his own chair.

When the man had bowed himself out, and the duke and his visitor were left alone, the former said:

"You know why I sent for you here. Now what do you advise?"

"You must blow out the man's brains and break the woman's heart," softly and sweetly replied the dandy duellist.

"The question arises whether the man has any brains to blow out, or the woman any heart to break," grimly commented the duke. "However," he added, "you are right, Morris. I must kill the man—divorce the woman. You are with me?"

"To the death," answered the *elegant,* in the same easy tone in which he ever uttered even the most ferocious words.

"You will take my challenge?"

"With much pleasure."

"I wonder where the fellow is to be found. At the Russian Embassy, I suppose," observed the duke, as he turned to his writing-table.

"No, not there. The Count de Volaski has withdrawn or been dismissed from the Embassy. It is not certainly known which. He is, meanwhile, at the Trois Freres. He has the honor of being my fellow-lodger," suavely observed the colonel.

"There," said the duke, as he folded and directed his note, "no time should be lost in an affair of this sort. It is not yet ten o'clock. You may even deliver this challenge to-night, if you will be so kind."

"Certainly," murmured the graceful colonel, rising.

"I leave everything absolutely in your hands. Make

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every arrangement you may think proper; I will agree to it all; and many thanks," said the duke, striving to maintain a calm exterior, while his spirit was troubled within him.

"Expect me back to-night. I may be late, but I shall certainly report myself here," were the parting words of Colonel Morris as he left the room.

The duke walked slowly up and down the floor for nearly half an hour, and then he sat down to his desk and employed some hours in writing letters to his family, friends and men of business in England.

When he had completed his task he sealed and directed all these letters and locked them in his desk.

At a quarter-past twelve the colonel returned to the hotel, and immediately presented himself at the duke's apartments.

He entered with a soft smile, and gently sank into a seat.

"Well?" inquired the duke.

"Well," cheerfully responded the second; "everything is pleasantly arranged. I had the good fortune of finding the count 'with himself,' as they say here. I explained my errand and delivered your missive. He read it and expressed his gratification at its reception, declaring that you had anticipated him by but a few hours, as he should certainly have called you out immediately upon hearing of your arrival in Paris."

"The diabolical villain!" hotly exclaimed the duke.

"He claimed the first right to the lady in question, and affirmed that it was your grace who had appropriated his wife——"

"*Oh-h-h!* when shall I have the opportunity of shooting him?" cried the duke.

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"By and by," soothingly responded the colonel. "He referred me to his friend, Baron Blowmonozoff, then staying at the same house."

"Blowmonozoff! Yes, I know him. A very good fellow."

"A gentleman, I think. Of course I went directly from the presence of the count to that of the baron, who received me with much politeness, and was so kind as to express the pleasure he should feel in negotiating with me the terms of so interesting a meeting."

"And the terms, Colonel! What are they?"

"I am coming to them. The meeting is to take place at sunrise in the wood of Vincennes. We are to leave here an hour before dawn, in order to be on the spot in time. The weapons are to be pistols; the distance ten paces. Other minor details will be arranged on the spot. We shall each take a surgeon. I have engaged Doctor Legare. We will call and pick him up on our way to the ground. And now all we have got to do is to ring for the English waiter here, and get him to send us some coffee before we go out. I will see to that also, as I have taken a room in the house, and intend to stay here to-night, so as to be up in time in the morning."

"Thanks, very much. You are really very good to take so much trouble," said the duke, with some emotion.

"No trouble, I assure you, duke; quite a pleasure," serenely answered the colonel.

"My friend, I have left half a dozen letters locked up in my writing-desk. I shall hand the key of that desk to you as we go out. If I should fall, I hope you will take charge of the desk and see to the delivery of the

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letters at their proper addresses," said the duke, more gravely than he had spoken before.

"Certainly, with much pleasure. Have you also made your will?" cheerfully inquired the colonel.

"No," shortly replied the duke.

"Then permit me to say that I think you should do so, by all means."

"There is no need. My estates are all entailed. My personal property is not worth winning. The—duchess is provided by her own dower, which came out of her own property, I am thankful to say. No, there is no need of a will."

"Then allow me to suggest that we ought to go to bed. It is now two o'clock. We must be up at five. We have just three hours to sleep, and—if you have no other commissions for me—I will retire," said the colonel, smoothly.

"Many thanks. I believe there is nothing more to be said or done to-night," responded the duke, in a despondent tone—for it *cannot* be an exhilarating anticipation to have to get up in the morning and stand up to murder, or be murdered, even where the duellist is the bravest of men, backed by the serenest of seconds.

"Then, since there is no further use for me this evening, I will say good-night and pleasant dreams," said the colonel, suavely, as he slid from the room.

Good-night and pleasant dreams to a duellist on the eve of a duel! Was it a sarcasm on the colonel's part? By no means; it was only the manifestation of his habitual smooth politeness.

The duke, left to himself, walked up and down the floor for a few minutes, and then rang for his valet to

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attend him, and retired to bed, leaving orders to be called at five o'clock in the morning.

Though left in quietness, he could not compose himself to sleep, but tossed and tumbled from side to side, spending the most wakeful and the most miserable night he had ever known in the whole course of his life. The time seemed stretched out upon a rack of torture, until the four hours extended to forty; for from the moment he had lain down he had not slept an instant, until he was startled by a rap at his bedroom door, and the voice of his valet calling:

"If you please, your grace, the clock has struck five; the coffee is ready, and the cab is at the door."

"Then come in and dress me quickly," answered the duke, rising, as the prompt servant entered and handed a dressing-gown.

The toilet of the duke was quickly made.

When he passed into the next room, he found the breakfast table laid and the colonel waiting for him.

"Good-morning, Duke. I hope you slept well. The day promises to be delightful. We have no time to lose, however, if we are to be on the ground at sunrise. Shall we have our coffee?" serenely inquired the second.

"Certainly—Tompkins, touch the bell," replied the duke.

The obedient valet rang, and a waiter entered with the breakfast-tray, which he set upon the table and proceeded to arrange.

"Take this case of pistols down very carefully, and place it in the cab, and put in a railway rug also," quietly directed the colonel, after the waiter had completed the arrangement of the breakfast-table.

"What possible use can we make of a railway rug on

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such a mild morning as this?" gloomily inquired the duke.

The colonel looked calmly at the questioner, and quietly replied:

"To cover the body of the fallen man, whoever he may happen to be. I am so used to these affairs that I know what will be wanted beforehand. Shall we sit down to breakfast?"

Now the duke was a courageous man, but he shud dered at the coolness of his second, as he assented.

They sat down to the table and drank their coffee in silence.

Then with the assistance of the obsequious Mr. Tompkins, they drew on light overcoats suitable to the autumnal morning, and went downstairs, caps and gloves in hand, and entered the carriage that was to take them to the appointed place.

On their way they stopped at the Rue du Bains and took the surgeon who had been engaged to attend them.

Dr. Legare was a young graduate who had just commenced practice, and was eager for the fray.

He came into the carriage, bringing a rather ostentatious-looking case of instruments and roll of bandages.

On being introduced by the second, he bowed to the duke and took his seat.

The carriage started again.

It was yet dark.

After an hour's ride they reached a quiet, solitary glade in the wood of Vincennes.

The carriage drove up under some trees on one side.

It was yet earliest morning, and the glade lay in the darksome, dewy freshness of the dawn. There was no living creature to be seen.

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"We are the first on the ground, as I always like to be," remarked Colonel Morris, as he alighted from the carriage, bearing the pistol-case in his hands.

He was followed by the duke, who slowly came out, stood by his side and looked around.

The young surgeon remained in the carriage in charge of his very suggestive and alarming instruments and appliances.

"The sun is just rising," said the duke, as the first rays sparkled up above the rosy line of the eastern horizon.

"And look, with dramatic precision, there are our men," cheerfully remarked the colonel, as a second carriage rolled into the glade and drew up under the trees at a short distance from the first.

The carriage door was thrown open and the Russian Baron Blowmonozoff came out—a thin, ferocious-looking little man, with a red face, encircled by a red beard and red hair, of all of which it would be difficult to say which was reddest.

He was followed by the beautiful Adonis, the Count de Volaski, looking very fair and dainty, very languid and melancholy.

The four gentlemen simultaneously raised their hats in courteous greeting, but no words passed between them.

The seconds advanced toward each other, and went apart to settle the final details of the meeting. They divided their duties equally.

The colonel gave the pistol-case to the baron, who opened it and examined the weapons. The colonel stepped off the ten paces of ground, and the baron marked the positions to be taken by the antagonists.

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Then each went after his man and placed him in position. Then the Colonel took the case of pistols and placed it in the hands of the baron, who carried it to his principal, that the latter might take his choice of the pair of revolvers, in accordance with the terms of the meeting.

The count took the first that came to hand. The baron carried back the case to the colonel, who placed the remaining weapon in the hands of the duke.

The antagonists stood opposite each other in a line of ten paces running north and south, so that the sun was equally divided between them. The seconds stood opposite each other, in a line of six paces running east and west, across the line of their principals; so that the positions of the four men, as they stood, formed the four points of a diamond.

They stood prepared for the mortal issue.

A fatal catastrophe is always sudden and soon over.

The final question was asked by the duke's second:

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"We are," responded both principals.

"One—two—three—FIRE!" intoned the Russian baron.

Two flashes, a simultaneous report, and the Count de Volaski leaped into the air and fell down, with a heavy thud, upon his face!

The seconds hastened to raise the fallen man. The duke stood panic-stricken for an instant, and then followed them.

The unfortunate count lay in a tumbled, huddled, shapeless heap, with his head bent under him. Not a drop of blood was to be seen on his person or clothing. The Russian baron raised him up. There was a gasp, a

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momentary flutter of the lips and eyelids, and all was still.

The colonel hurried off to the carriage to call the surgeon.

The duke stood gazing on his murdered foe, aghast at his own deed, and feeling the brand of Cain upon his brow, notwithstanding that he had acted in accordance with the "code of honor."

The surgeon came in haste with his box of instruments in his hands, and the roll of linen under his arm.

He put these articles on the ground, and knelt down to examine his subject; for the body of the count was only a subject now, and not a patient.

After a careful investigation, the surgeon arose and pronounced his verdict.

"Shot through the heart: quite dead."

The Duke of Hereward groaned aloud. None of his wrongs could have been such a calamity as this! None of his sufferings could have equalled in intensity of agony this appalling sense of blood-guiltiness!

"Can *nothing* be done?" he inquired, not with the slightest hope that anything could, but rather in the idiocy of utter despair.

"Nothing. No medical skill can raise the dead," solemnly answered the surgeon.

"One of you fellows can bring the railway rug out of our carriage. I knew it would be needed," said the serenely practical colonel.

The count's servant started to obey.

The duke groaned and turned away from the body of his fallen foe, upon which he could not endure longer to gaze.

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The Russian baron came up to him, and with the knightly courtesy of his caste and country, said:

"Monseigneur may rest tranquil. Everything has been conducted in accordance with the most rigid rules of honor. The result has been unfortunate for my distinguished principal, but Monseigneur has nothing with which to reproach himself."

"Thanks, Baron. You are kind to say so. Yet I would that I had never lived to see this day, or the worthless woman who has caused this catastrophe!" exclaimed the duke, as he walked hurriedly away and hid himself and his remorse in the inclosure of his own carriage.

There he was soon joined by his serene second, who entered the carriage and gave the order to the coachman:

"Drive to the Depot St. Lazare."

"Why to the depot?" gloomily inquired the duke, as the coachman closed the door and remounted to his box.

"Because we must get out of Paris—yes, and out of France also," calmly replied the colonel, sinking back in his seat as the cab drove off.

"Who is looking after—after——"

"The body? I left Legare to help Blowmonozoff and his servant to remove it. We must get away. An arrest would not be pleasant."

"No, no, certainly not; yet not on that account, but for the peace of my own spirit, I would to Heaven this had not happened!" exclaimed the duke.

"Why? Everything went off most agreeably. Indeed, this was one of the most satisfactory meetings at which I ever assisted," said the colonel, comfortably.

"I wish to Heaven it had never taken place! I would

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give my right hand to undo its own deed to-day—if that were possible!" groaned the homicide.

"Why should you disturb yourself?—but perhaps this is your first affair of the kind?" calmly inquired the colonel.

"My first and last! I do not know how any one can engage in a second one after feeling what it is to kill a man."

"You feel so because it *is* your first affair. You would not mind your second, and you would rather enjoy your third," suavely observed the colonel, who then drew a railway card from his pocket, examined it, looked at his watch, and said:

"We shall be in time to catch the morning's express to Calais, and we may actually eat our dinners in London. When we arrive you can get some of your people to send a telegram to Tompkins, to order him to pay your hotel bill and bring your effects to London, or wherever else you may think of stopping."

"Thanks for your counsel. I leave myself entirely in your hands," said the duke, with a half-suppressed sigh.

They caught the express to Calais, connected with the Dover boat, and crossed the channel the same day. They ran up to London by the afternoon train, and arrived in good time for a dinner at "Morley's."

Two telegrams were dispatched to Paris—one to the respectable Mr. Tompkins, with orders to pay bills and return with his master's effects; the other to the estimable Mr. Joyce, the groom of the colonel, with orders to perform the same services in behalf of his own employer.

Then the principal and his second separated—the

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duke to go to his town house in Piccadilly and the colonel to join his regiment, then stationed at Brighton.

And as the extradition treaty had not at that day been thought of, both were perfectly safe.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER THE STORM

The Duke of Hereward only remained in town until the arrival of his servants with his effects from Paris.

He avoided looking at the newspapers, which, he knew, must contain exaggerated statements of the duel and its causes, if, indeed, any statement of such horrors could be exaggerated.

On the third day after his arrival in London, he went down to Greencombe, a small family estate in a secluded part of Sussex, near the sea.

Here he hid himself and his humiliations from the world.

The primitive population around Greencombe had never seen the duke, or any of his family, who preferred to reside at Hereward Hold, in Devonshire, or their town-house in Piccadilly, leaving their small Sussex place in charge of a land-steward and a few old servants.

They had never even heard of the marriage of the duke in Paris, much less the flight of the duchess, or the duel with Volaski.

This neglect of his poor people at Greencombe had hitherto been a matter of compunction to the conscientious soul of the duke, but he now was satisfied with the

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course of conduct which had left them in total ignorance of himself and his unhappy domestic history.

The duke and his fine servants were received with mingled deference, gladness and embarrassment by the aged and rustic couple who acted as land-steward and housekeeper at Greencombe, and who now bestirred themselves to make their unexpected master and his attendants comfortable.

The duke gave orders that he should be denied to all visitors, though there was little likelihood of any calling upon him, except perhaps the vicar of Greencombe church.

Here the duke vegetated until the meeting of Parliament, when he went up to London to institute proceedings for a divorce.

At that time there was no divorce court, and little necessity for one. Divorces were to be obtained by act of Parliament only.

The duke commenced proceedings immediately on his arrival in London. His case was a clear and simple one; there was no opposition; consequently he was soon, matrimonially, considered a free man.

The Duke of Hereward was now nearly fifty years of age. Life was uncertain, and the laws of succession very certain.

If the present bearer of the coronet of Hereward should die childless, the title would not descend to the son of his only and beloved sister, but would go to a distant relative whom the duke hated.

A speedy marriage seemed necessary.

The duke looked around the upper circle of London society, and fixed upon the Lady Augusta Victoria McDugald, the eldest daughter of the Earl of Banff,

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and a woman as little like his unhappy first wife as it was possible for her to be.

"The daughter of an hundred earls" was tall and stately, cold and proud, embodying the child's or the peasant's very ideal of "a duchess."

Dukes, like monarchs, "seldom woo in vain."

After a short courtship the duke proposed for the lady, and after a shorter engagement, married her.

The newly-wedded pair went on a very unusually extended tour over Europe, into Asia and Africa, and then across the ocean and over North and South America.

After twelve months spent in travel, they returned to England only that the anticipated heir of the dukedom might be born on the patrimonial estate of Hereward Hold.

There was the utmost fulfillment of hope. The expected child proved to be a fine boy, who was christened for his father, Archibald-Alexander-John, by courtesy styled Marquis of Arondelle.

Had the duke's mind been as free from remorse for his homicide as his heart was free from regret for his first love, he would have been as happy a man as he was a proud father; but ah! the sense of blood-guiltiness, although incurred in the duel, under the so-called "code of honor," weighed heavily upon his conscience, and overshadowed all his joys.

His duchess was a prolific mother, and brought him other sons and daughters as the years went by; but, as if some spell of fatality hung over the family, these children all passed away in childhood, leaving only the young Marquis of Arondelle as the sole hope of the great ducal house of Hereward.

So the time passed in varied joys and sorrows, with-

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out bringing any tidings, good or bad, of the poor, lost girl who had once shared the duke's title and possessed his heart.

He believed her to be as dead to the world as she was to him. And so he gradually forgot even that she had ever lived! She had long been "out of mind" as "out of sight."

Fifteen years of married life had passed over the heads of the Duke and Duchess of Hereward.

The duchess at thirty-five was still a very beautiful woman, a reigning belle, a leader of fashion, a queen of society.

The duke at sixty-five was still a very handsome, stately and commanding old gentleman, with hair and beard as white as snow. He was a great political power in the House of Lords. Their son, the young Marquis of Arondelle, was a fine boy of fourteen.

It was very early summer in London. Parliament was in session, and the season was at its height.

The Duke and Duchess of Hereward were established in their magnificent town-house in Piccadilly.

The Marquis of Arondelle was pursuing his studies at Eton.

A memorable day was at hand for the duke.

It was the morning of the first of June—a rarely brilliant and beautiful day for London.

The duchess had gone down to a garden party at Buckingham Palace.

The duke sat alone in his sumptuous library, whose windows overlooked the luxuriant garden, then in its fullest bloom and fragrance.

The windows were open, admitting the fine, fresh air

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of summer, perfumed with the aroma of numberless flowers, and musical with the songs of many birds.

The duke sat in a comfortable reading-chair, with an open book on its rotary ledge. He was not reading. The charm of external nature, appealing equally to sense and sentiment, won him from his mental task, and soothed him into a delicious reverie, during which he sat simply resting, breathing, gazing, luxuriating in the lovely life around him.

In the midst of this clear sky a thunderbolt fell.

A discreet footman rapped softly, and being told to enter, glided into the room, bearing a card upon a tiny silver tray, which he brought to his master.

The duke took it, languidly glanced at it, knit his brows, and took up his reading-glass and examined it closely. No! his eyes had not deceived him. The card bore the name: ARCHIBALD A. J. SCOTT.

"Who brought this?" inquired the duke.

"A young gentleman, sir," respectfully answered the footman.

"Where is he?"

"I showed him into the blue reception-room, your grace."

The duke paused a moment, gazing at the card, and then abruptly demanded:

"What is the young man like?"

"Most genteel, your grace; most like our young lord, and about his age, and dressed in the deepest mourning, your grace; and most particular anxious to see your grace."

"I do not know the boy at all; do not know where he came from, nor what he wants; but he bears the

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family name, and looks like Arondelle," mused the duke, gazing at the card and knitting his brow.

"I will see the young man. Show him up here," at length he said, abruptly.

The footman bowed and withdrew.

A few moments passed and the footman re-entered and announced:

"Mr. Scott," and withdrew.

The duke wheeled his chair around and looked at the visitor, who stood just within the door, bowing profoundly.

The newcomer was a youth of about fifteen years of age, tall, slight and elegant in form; fair, blue-eyed and light-haired in complexion; refined, graceful and self-possessed in manner; and faultlessly dressed in deep mourning; but! how amazingly like the duke's own son, the young Marquis of Arondelle.

The duke's short survey of his visitor seemed so satisfactory that he arose and advanced to meet him, saying kindly:

"You wished particularly to see me, I understand, young gentleman. In what manner can I serve you?"

The youth bowed again with the deepest deference, and said:

"Thanks, your grace. I bring you a letter of introduction."

"Sit down, young sir, sit down, and give me your letter," said the duke, pointing to a chair, and resuming his own seat. "Good Heaven, how like this boy's voice was to the voice of the young Marquis of Arondelle! Who could he be?" mused the duke, as he sat and waited the issue.

The youth seated himself as directed, and seemed to

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hesitate, as if respectfully referring to his host's convenience.

"Your letter of introduction, now, if you please, young sir," said the duke, at length.

"Thanks, your grace. It's from my mother. She——" Here the boy's voice faltered and broke down; but he soon recovered it and resumed: "She wrote it on her deathbed—on the very day she died. Here it is, your grace."

The duke took the letter and held it gravely in his fingers while he gazed upon the orphaned boy with sympathy and compassion in every lineament of his fine face, saying, slowly and seriously:

"Ah! that is very, very sad. You have lost your mother, my boy; and if I judge correctly from the circumstance of your coming to me, you have lost your father also. I hope, however, I am wrong."

"Your grace is right. I have lost my father also. I lost him first, so long ago that I have no memory of him. I have no relatives at all. That is the reason why my dear mother, on her deathbed, gave me that letter of introduction to your grace, who used to know her, so that I might not be without friends as well as without relatives," modestly replied the youth.

"Ah! I see! I see! And she wrote this letter on her deathbed, which gives it a grave importance. I must therefore pay the more respect to it. The wishes of the dying should be considered sacred," said the duke, as he adjusted his glass and looked at the letter, wondering who the writer could be and what claims she could possibly have on him; but feeling too kindly toward the orphan boy to let such thought betray itself.

He scrutinized the handwriting of the letter. He

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could not recognize the faint, scratchy, uncertain characters as anything he had ever seen before. After all, the whole thing might be an imposture, and he himself an exceedingly great dupe, to suffer his feelings to be enlisted by a perfect stranger, merely because that stranger happened to be a counterpart of his own idolized boy Arondelle.

Still dallying with the note, he looked again at the youth, and as he looked, his confidence in him revived. No boy of such a noble countenance could possibly be an impostor. He might have satisfied himself at once, by opening the note and reading the signature; but from some occult reason that even he could not have given, he held it in his hands for a few moments longer, as if it contained some oracle he dreaded to discover. At length he broke the seal and looked at the signature. It was a faint maze of scratches, so difficult to decipher that he gave it up in despair, and turning to the boy, said:

"Your name is Scott, young sir?"

"Yes, your grace—a very common name," modestly replied the youth.

"It is ours, also," added the duke with a smile.

"I beg your grace's pardon," said the boy, with some embarrassment.

"No offense, young sir. Your mother's name was also Scott, I presume?"

"Yes, your grace; my mother never re-married."

"Ah," said the duke, and he turned the letter for the first page, and commenced its perusal.

And then—

Reader! If the Duke of Hereward's hair had not already been white with age, it must have turned as

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white as snow with amazement and horror as he read the astounding disclosures of that dying woman's letter!

CHAPTER XVIII

FATHER AND SON

THE first part of the letter was written in a much clearer chirography than the latter, where it grew fainter and more irregular as it proceeded, until at last, in the signature, it was so nearly illegal as to baffle the ingenuity of the reader to decipher it; as if, in the course of her task, the strength of the dying writer had grown weaker and weaker, until at the end the pen must have fallen from her failing hand.

The Duke of Hereward, who could not make out the name at the bottom of the letter, at once recognized the handwriting at the top, and knew that his correspondent from the dead was his lost wife, Valerie de la Motte.

He grew cold with the chill of an anticipated horror; but with that supreme power of self-control which was as much a matter of constitution as of education with him, he suppressed all signs of emotion, and courteously apologized to his visitor, saying:

"Excuse me, young sir; my eyes are not so good as they were some twenty years ago, and I must turn to the light," and he deliberately wheeled his chair around so as to bring his face entirely out of range of his visitor's sharp vision, while he should read the fatal letter, which was as follows:

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San Vito, Italy, March 1st, 18—

Duke of Hereward:—This paper will be handed to you by Archibald-Alexander-John Scott, my son and yours.

This news will startle you, if you have not already been sufficiently startled by the living likeness of the boy to yourself, and by the electric chain of memory which will bring before you the weeks immediately preceding our separation, when you yourself had suspicions of my condition, and hopes of becoming a father. Those fond hopes were destined to be fulfilled by me, but doomed to be ruined by you.

Yes, Duke of Hereward, your son stands before you, strong, healthy, beautiful, perfect as ever wife bore to her husband; yet denied, delegalized, and defrauded by you, his father!

If you are inclined still to deny him, turn and look upon him, as he stands, and you can no longer do so. If you want further proof, find it in these circumstances: That this letter is written, and these statements are made, by a dying woman, with the immediate prospect of eternity and its retribution before her.

But on one point be at ease before you read further; the boy does not know who his father is, and therefore does not know how grievously, how irretrievably you wronged him by divorcing his mother and delegalizing him before his birth. I would not put enmity between father and son by telling him anything about it. *He* thinks that his father is dead, and I have never undeceived him. He has heard of you only as one who was a friend of his mother, and who, for her sake, may become a friend of her son. It must be for you to decide

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whether to leave him in this ignorance or to tell him the truth.

Perhaps you will ask why I have concealed your son's existence from you up to this time. I will tell you; but in order to do so clearly, I must refer to those last few weeks spent with you in Paris before our separation.

Remember the ball at the British Embassy, to which you persuaded me to go, and where I met, unexpectedly, the Count de Volaski, my secretly married husband, supposed to be dead; remember my illness that followed! and how earnestly I tried to avoid him, an effort that was totally useless, because he, considering that he possessed the only rightful claim to my society, constantly sought me, and you, ignorant of all his antecedents, constantly helped him to see me.

My position was degrading, agonizing, intolerable. I found myself, though guiltless of any intentional wrong-doing, in the horrible dilemma of a wife with two living husbands.

Yes, by the laws of love and nature, justice and the church, I was the wife of Waldemar de Volaski; by the laws of France and England, I was the wife of the Duke of Hereward.

The discovery shocked, confused, and, perhaps, unsettled my reason. At first I knew not what to do. I prayed for death. I contemplated suicide. At length, I thought I saw a way out of my dreadful dilemma. It was to escape and to live apart from both forever.

So also thought the Count de Volaski. I consulted with him. I dared not confess to you the secret that my parents had compelled me to conceal so long. Volaski would have told you, but I would not consent that he should do so, until I should be safe out of the house;

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for I could not have borne, after such confession, to have met you again; and again, under any circumstances, I preferred that I myself should be your informant. I determined to leave you, and to live apart from both, as the only life of peace and honor possible for me, and to write you a letter confessing the whole truth, as an explanation of my course of conduct. I thought that you would understand and pity me, and leave me to my fate.

I did *not* think that you would disbelieve my statement, publish my flight, and blast my reputation by a divorce.

I was never false to you in thought, word or deed.

Volaski was not my lover; he was my sternest mentor. He came to the house during your absence; not for the pleasure of seeing me, for he took no pleasure in my society; he came to arrange with me the program of my departure; an angel of purity or a demon of malice might have been present at our interviews, and seen nothing to grieve the first or please the last.

I was ill and nervous and fearful; I could not travel alone, and therefore Volaski went with me, and took care of me; but it was the care a pitiless gendarme would have taken of a convicted criminal. It was a care that only hurried me to my destination, my chosen place of exile—San Vito—and which left me on the day of my arrival there. I have never seen him since. And now let me say and swear on the Christian faith and hope of a dying woman—that—from the moment I met Count Waldemar de Volaski at the British embassy, to the moment I parted with him at San Vito, he never once came so near me as even to kiss my hand—a courtesy that any gentleman might have shown without

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blame. You may not believe me now; that you did not believe me before was your great misfortune, and mine, and our son's.

A week after Volaski had left me you followed us and traced us to San Vito. I heard of your visit and trembled; for, though really guiltless, I felt that to meet your eye would seem worse than death. Fortunately for us both, perhaps, you declined to see me and went away.

The next news that I heard was of the duel in which you had killed Volaski. I should scarcely have believed in his death this time, had not a packet been forwarded to me, through his second. This packet contained a letter that he had written to me on the eve of the duel, and with a presentiment of death overshadowing him. In this letter he said that in death he claimed me again as his wife, and bequeathed to me, as to his widow, all that he had the power to leave, his personal property, and he took a last solemn farewell of me.

In the packet, besides, was his will and other documents necessary to put me in possession of his bequest, and also a great number of valuable jewels.

These, together with my own small dower, have made me independent for life.

It will show how perfectly palsied was my heart when I tell you that I could not feel either horror of crime, grief for Volaski's death, or gratitude for his bequest.

I could feel nothing.

Days and weeks passed in this apathy of despair, from which I was at length painfully aroused by a most shocking discovery.

Madelena, my hostess, who tenderly watched over my health, had her suspicions aroused, and put some moth-

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erly questions to me, and when I had answered them she startled me with the announcement that in a very few months I should become a mother.

This news, so joyful to most good women, only filled my soul with sorrow and dismay. It seemed to complicate my difficulties beyond all possibility of extrication.

Lena, poor woman, who had never heard of my marriage with the Duke of Hereward, but had known me as the wife of the Count de Volaski, believed that all my distress was caused by the prospect of becoming the mother of a fatherless child, and bent all her energies to try to comfort me with the assurance that this motherhood would be the greatest blessing of my lonely life.

Ah! how willingly would I have confided the whole truth to this good woman if I had dared to do so! It will show how timid I had grown when I assure you that I, a faithful daughter of the church, had not even ventured to go to confession once since my arrival in Italy.

Now, Duke of Hereward, attend to my words! Had you been less bitterly incredulous of my statements, less cruel in your judgment of me, less murderous in your vengeance upon one much more sinned against than sinning, I should have ventured to write to you of my condition and my prospect of giving you an heir to your dukedom, in time to prevent your rash and fatal act by which you unconsciously delegalized your own lawful son!

But your murderous cruelty had left me in a state of stupor from which I could not rally.

Night after night I resolved to write to you. Day after day I tried to carry my resolution into effect. Time after time I failed through fear of you!

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At length I persuaded myself that there was no immediate necessity for action on my part. I might defer writing to you until the arrival of my child. That child might prove to be a girl, who could not be your heir, and, therefore, could not be an object of momentous importance to you; or it might die. Either of which circumstances would relieve me from the painful duty of opening a correspondence with you; or I myself might perish in the coming trial, when the duty of communicating the facts to you would devolve upon some one whom I would appoint with my dying breath.

These were the causes of my fatal delay in writing to you.

At length the time arrived. On the fifth of April, just five months after our separation, I became the mother of a fine, healthy, beautiful boy. He brought with him the mother-love that is Heaven's first gift to the child. I loved my son as I never loved a human being before. I *had* prayed for death; but as I clasped my first-born to my bosom, I asked pardon for that sinful prayer, thanked the Lord that I had lived through my trial, and besought him still to spare my life for my boy's sake. From that day forth I was able to pray and to give thanks. I resolved that my first act of recovery should be to go to the church and make my confession to the good father there, gain my absolution, and then write and inform you of the birth of your heir, the infant Earl of Arondelle, for such I knew was even then the baby boy's title! With these fond hopes I rapidly recovered. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Mother-love had cast out from my soul all fear of you. I thought that you would feel so rejoiced at the news of the birth of your son, your heir, and so fine a boy, that

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even for his sake you would forgive his mother, supposing that you should still think you had anything to forgive.

In the midst of my vain dreaming a thunderbolt fell upon me!

My boy was six weeks old. I had not yet left the house to carry out any of my happy resolutions, when my good Madelena entered my room and brought two large parcels of English papers, such as were sent me monthly by my London correspondent. She told me that the first parcel had arrived during my confinement to my bed, and that she had laid it away and forgotten all about it until this day, when the arrival of the second parcel had reminded her of it, and now she had brought them both, and hoped I would excuse her negligence in not having remembered to bring the first parcel sooner. I readily and even hastily excused her, for I was anxious to get rid of my good hostess and read my files of papers.

As any one else would have done under the like circumstances, I opened the last parcel first, and selected the latest paper to begin with. It was the London *Times* of April 7th. As I opened it, a short, marked paragraph caught my eyes.

Judge of my consternation when I read the notice of your marriage with the Lady Augusta McDugald!

The letters ran together on my vision, the room whirled around with me, all grew dark, and I lost consciousness. When I recovered my senses I found myself in bed, with Madelena and several of her kind neighbors in attendance upon me. Many days passed before I was able to look again at the file of English newspapers.

You had married again! you had married just one

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week before the birth of my son! But under what circumstances had you married? Did you suppose me to be dead, and that my death had set you free? Or—oh, horror! had you dragged my name before a public tribunal, and by lying *facts*—for facts do often lie—had you branded me with infidelity, and repudiated me by divorce?

Such were the questions that tormented me, until I was able to examine the file of English newspapers, and find out from them; for, as before, I would not have taken any one into my confidence by getting another to read the papers for me, even if I could have found any one in that rural Italian neighborhood capable of reading English.

At length, one morning, I sent for the papers, and began to look them over, and I found—merciful Heaven! what I feared to find—the full report of our divorce trial! found myself held up to public scorn and execration, the reproach of my own sex—the contempt of yours! found myself, in short, convicted and divorced from you, upon the foulest charge that can be brought upon a woman! Guiltless as I was! wronged as I had been! wishing only to live a pure and blameless life, as I did!

Oh! the intolerable anguish of the days that followed! But for my baby boy, I think I should have died, or maddened!

In my worst paroxysms, good Madelena would come and take up my baby and lay him on my bosom, and whisper, that no doubt, though his handsome young father had gone to Heaven, it was all for the best; and we, too, if we were good, would one day meet him there, or words to that effect.

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Surely angels are with children, and their presence makes itself felt in the comfort children bring to wounded hearts.

One day, in a state bordering on idiocy, I think, I examined and compared dates, in the sickening hope that my darling boy might have been born before the decree of divorce had been pronounced, and thus be the heir of his father's dukedom, notwithstanding all that followed.

But, ah! that faint hope also was destined to die! The dates, compared, stood thus:

The decree of divorce pronounced February 13th, 18—.

The marriage between yourself and Lady Augusta McDugald was solemnized April 1st, 18—.

My boy was born April 15th, 18.—

Yes, you divorced the guiltless mother two months, and married another woman two weeks, before the birth of your innocent boy.

You cruelly and unjustly disowned, disinherited, and even delegalized and degraded your son before he was born! So that your son was not born in wedlock, could not bear your name, or inherit your title! And this misfortune came upon him by no fault of his, or of his most unhappy mother's, but by the jealousy, vengeance, and fatal rashness of his father! And now there was no help, either in law or equity, for the dishonored boy.

This, Duke of Hereward, is the ruin you have wrought in his life, in mine, and in yours.

Do you wonder that when I realized it all I fell into a state of despair deeper than any I had ever yet known? —a despair that was characterized by all who saw it as melancholy madness.

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My dear boy, who was at first such a comfort to me, was now only a beloved sorrow! When I held him to my bosom, I thought of nothing but his bitter, irreparable wrongs.

I do not know how long I had continued to live in this despairing and heathenish condition, when one day, in harvest time, Madelena brought good Father Antonio to see me. This Father Antonio was the priest of the chapel of Santa Maria, who had performed the marriage ceremony between Waldemar de Volaski and myself.

The father also naturally supposed that all my grief was for the death of my child's father. He began in a gentle, admonitory way to rebuke me for inordinate affection and sinful repining, and to remind me of the comfort and strength to be found in the spirit of religion and the ordinances of the Church.

My heart opened to the good old priest as it had never opened to a living man or even woman before.

Then and there I told him the whole secret history of my life, including every detail of my two unhappy marriages, and the fatal divorce preceding the birth of my son. I concealed nothing from him. I told him all, and felt infinitely relieved when I had done so.

The gentle old man dropped tears of pity over me, and sat in silent sympathy some time before he ventured to give me any words.

At length he arose and said:

"Child, I must go home and pray for wisdom before I can venture to counsel you."

"Bless me, then, holy father."

He laid his venerable hands upon my bowed head, raised his eyes to Heaven, and invoked upon me the divine benediction, of which I stood so much in need.

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Then he silently passed from the room.

That night I slept in peace.

The next day the good old man came to me again.

He told me that my first marriage with Waldemar de Volaski was my only true marriage, indissoluble by anything but death, however invalid in law it might be pronounced by those who were interested in breaking it.

That my second marriage contracted with the Duke of Hereward during the life of my first husband, was sacrilegious in the eyes of religion and the church, however legal it might be considered by the laws of England or of France, and pardonable in me only on account of my ignorance at the time of the continued existence of my first husband.

That the desperate step I had taken of leaving the Duke of Hereward, upon the discovery of the existence of Waldemar de Volaski, was the right and proper course for me to pursue; but that he regretted I had not possessed the moral courage to tell the duke the whole story, for he had that much right to my confidence.

As for the divorce I so much lamented, it was to be regretted only for the sake of the son whom it had outlawed, for he was the son of a lawful marriage in the eyes of the world, if not a sacred one in the eyes of the church.

For the boy thus cruelly wronged there seemed no opening on earth. He was disowned, disinherited, delegalized, deprived even of a name in this world. All earth was closed against him.

But all Heaven was open to him. The church, Heaven's servant, would open her arms to receive the child the world had cast out. The church in baptism

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would give him a name and a surname; would give him an education and a mission. I must, like Hannah of old, devote my son, even from his childhood up, to the service of the altar, and the church would do the rest.

How comforted I was! I had something still to live for! My outcast son would be saved. He could not inherit his father's titles and estates; he could not be a duke, but he would be a holy minister of the Lord; he might live to be a prince of the church, an archbishop or a cardinal.

Foolish ambition of a still worldly mother, you may think. Yes! but he was her only son, and she was worse than widowed.

I agreed to all the good priest said. I promised to dedicate my son to the service of the altar.

The next Sunday I went to the chapel of Santa Maria and had my child christened. I gave him in baptism the full name of his father. Beppo and Madelena stood as his sponsors. They told me St. John would be his patron saint.

I rallied from my torpor. I built a roomy cottage in a mountain dell near the chapel of Santa Maria, furnished it comfortably, and moved into it, and engaged an Italian nurse and housekeeper, for I had resolved to pass my life among the simple, kindly people who were the only friends misfortune had left me.

Another trial awaited me—a light one, however, in comparison to those I had suffered and outlived.

This trial came when my son was but little over a year old, and I had been about six months in the "Hermitage," as I called my new home.

One morning I received a file of English papers for the month of May just preceding. In the papers of the

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first week in May I saw announced the birth of your son, called the infant Marquis of Arondelle, and the heir. I read of the great rejoicings in all your various seats throughout the United Kingdom, and the congratulations of royalty itself, upon this auspicious event. I clasped my disinherited son to my bosom and wept the very bitterest tears I had ever shed in my life.

Later on I read in the papers for the last of May a graphic account of the grand pageantry of the christening, which took place at St. Peter's, Euston Square where an archbishop performed the sacred rites and a royal duke stood sponsor, and of the great feastings and rejoicings in hall and hut on every estate of yours throughout the kingdom. I thought of my disowned boy's humble baptism in the village church by the country priest, where two kind-hearted peasants stood sponsors for him, and I wept myself nearly blind that night.

The next day I went to the little church and told the good father there all about it. He understood and sympathized with me, counselled and comforted me as usual.

He admonished me that to escape from the wounds of the world, I must not only forsake the world, as I had done, but forget the world, as I had not done; to forget the world I must cease to search and inquire into its sayings and doings; and he advised me to write and stop all my newspapers, which only brought me news to disturb my peace of mind.

I followed the direction of my wise guide. I wrote immediately and stopped all my newspapers.

After that I devoted myself to the nurture of my child, to the care of my little household, to the relief of my poorer neighbors, and to the performance of my

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religious duties; and time brought me resignation and cheerfulness.

From that day to this, Duke of Hereward, I have never once seen your name printed or written, and never once heard it breathed. You may have passed away from earth, for aught I know to the contrary; though I hope and believe that you have not.

My boy throve finely. The good priest of Santa Maria took charge of his education for the first twelve years of the pupil's life, made of him, even at that early age, a good Latin and Greek scholar, and a fair mathematician; and would have prepared him to enter one of the German Universities, had not the summons come that cut short the good father's work on earth, and carried him to his eternal home.

It was soon after the loss of this kind friend, who had been the strong prop of my weakness, the wise counsellor of my ignorance, that my own health began to fail. The seeds of pulmonary consumption, inherited from my mother, began to develop, and nothing could arrest their progress. For the last three years I have been an invalid, growing worse and worse every year. Perhaps in no other climate, under no other treatment, could I have lived so long as I have been permitted to live here by the help of the pure air and the grape cure.

My boy, now fifteen years of age, is everything that I could wish him to be, except in one respect. He will not consent to enter the church. He wants to be a soldier, poor lad! Well, we cannot coerce him into a life of sanctity and self-denial. Such a life must always be a voluntary sacrifice. Neither do I wish to cross him, now that I am on my deathbed and doomed so soon to leave him.

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In these last days on earth, lying on my dying bed, travailing for his good, it has come to me like an inspiration that I must send him to his father. I must not leave him friendless in the world. And now that the priest Antonio has long passed away, and I am so soon to follow, he will have no friends except these poor, helpless Italian peasants among whom he has been reared. Therefore I must send him, in the hope that you will recognize him by his exact likeness to yourself, and prove his identity as your son, by all the testimony you can be sure to gather in Paris and at San Vito. I have written this long letter, in the intervals between pain and fever, during the last few weeks.

Yesterday, my faithful physician warned me that my days on earth had dwindled down to hours; that I might pass away at any moment now, and had therefore best attend to any necessary business that I might wish to settle.

This warning admonishes me to finish and close my letter. I end as I began, by swearing to you, by all the hopes of salvation in a dying woman, that Archibald Scott is your own son. You can prove this to your own satisfaction by coming to San Vito and examining the church register as to the dates of his birth, baptism, and so forth; by which you will find that he was born just five months after I left your roof, and just six months after our return from our long yachting cruise, and the renewal of my acquaintance with Count de Volaski, at the British minister's dinner. You see, by these circumstances, there cannot be even the shadow of a doubt as to his true parentage.

I repeat, that I have not told the boy the secret of his birth; to have done so might have been to have embit-

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tered his mind against you, and I would not on my deathbed do anything to sow enmity between father and son.

I leave to yourself to tell him, if you should ever think proper to do so, and with what explanations you may please to add.

I have constituted you his sole guardian, and trustee of the moderate property I bequeath him. He wishes to enter the army, and he will have money sufficient to purchase a commission and support himself respectably in some good regiment. I hope that when the proper time comes you will forward his ambition in this direction.

And so I leave him in your hands, for my feeble strength fails, and I can only add my name.

CHAPTER XIX

HER SON

The last lines of this sad letter were almost illegible in their faintness and irregularity; and the tangled skein of light scratches that stood proxy for a signature could never have been deciphered by the skill of man.

The Duke of Hereward had grown ten years older in the half hour he had spent in the perusal of this fatal letter. He was no longer only sixty-five years of age, and a "fine old English gentleman"; he seemed fully seventy-five years old, and a broken, decrepit, ruined man. In fact, the first blow had fallen upon that fine intellect whose subsequent eccentricities gained for him the sobriquet of the mad duke.

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The hand that held the fatal letter fell heavily by his side; his head drooped upon his chest; he did not move or speak for many minutes.

His young visitor watched him with curiosity and interest that gradually grew into anxiety. At length he made a motion to attract the duke's attention—dropped a book upon the floor, picked it up, and arose to apologize.

The duke started as from a profound reverie, sighed heavily, passed his handkerchief across his brow, and finally wheeled his chair around, and looked at his visitor.

No! there could be no question about it; the boy was the living image of what he himself had been at that age, as all his portraits could prove! and his eldest son, his rightful heir, stood before him, but forever and irrecoverably disinherited and delegalized by his own rash and cruel act.

The young man stood up as if naturally waiting to hear what the duke might have to say about his mother's letter.

But the duke did not immediately allude to the letter.

"Where are you stopping, my young friend?" he asked, in as calm a voice as he could command.

"At 'Langham's,' your grace," respectfully answered the youth.

"Very well. I will call and see you at your rooms to-morrow at eleven, and we will talk over your mother's plans and see what can be done for you," said the duke, as he touched the bell, and sank back heavily in his chair.

The young man understood that the interview was

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closed, and he was about to take his leave, when the door opened and a footman appeared.

"Truman, attend this young gentleman to the breakfast-room, and place refreshments before him. I hope that you will take something before you go, sir," said the duke, kindly.

"Thanks. I trust your grace will permit me to decline. It is scarce two hours since I breakfasted," said the boy, with a bow.

"As you please, young sir," answered the duke.

The youth then bowed and withdrew, attended by the footman.

The duke watched them through the door, listened to their retreating steps down the hall, and then threw his clasped hands to his head, groaning:

"Great Heaven! What have I done? What foul injustice to her, what cruel wrong to him? I thank her that she has never told him! I can never do so! Nay, Heaven forbid that he should ever even suspect the truth! Nor must I ever permit him to come here again; or to any house of mine, where the duchess, where *his brother,* where every servant even must see the likeness he bears to the family, and—discover, or, at least, suspect the secret!"

Meanwhile the youth, respectfully attended by the footman, left the house.

As he entered his cab that was waiting at the door, a bitter, bitter change passed over his fine face; the fair brow darkened, the blue eyes contracted and glittered, the lips were firmly compressed for an instant, and then he murmured to himself:

"That they should think a secret like this could be buried, concealed from me, the most interested of all to

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find it out! Was ever son so accused as I am? Other sons have been disinherited, outlawed—but I! I have been delegalized and degraded from my birth!"

The fine mouth closed with a spasmodic jerk, the brow grew darker, the eyes glittered with intenser fire. He resumed:

"It will be difficult, if not impossible, but I will be restored to my rights, or I will ruin and exterminate the ducal house of Hereward! I am the eldest son of my father; the only son of his first marriage. I am the heir not only of my father, but of the seven dukes and twenty barons that preceded him, to whom their patent of nobility was granted, to them and *their heirs forever!* 'Their heirs forever!' It was granted, therefore, to *me* and to all of *my* direct line! Each baron and duke had but his life-interest in his barony or dukedom, and could not alienate it from his heirs by will. It was an infamous, a fraudulent subterfuge to divorce my poor mother, and so delegalize me a few months before my birth. But—I will bide my time! This false heir may die. Such things do happen. And then, as there is no other heir to his title and estates, *my father* may acknowledge his eldest son, and try to undo the evil he has done. But if this should not happen, or if my father, who is old, should die, and this false heir inherit, *then* I will spend every shilling I have inherited from my mother to gain my own. I will have my rights, though I convict my father of a fraudulent conspiracy, and it requires an act of Parliament to effect my restoration! And if, after all, this wrong cannot be righted—although it can be abundantly proved that I am the only son of my father's first marriage, and the rightful heir of his dukedom, if, after all, I cannot be restored to my

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position, I will prove the mortal enemy of the race of Scott, and the destruction of the ducal house of Hereward. Meanwhile I must watch and wait; use this old man as my friend, who will not acknowledge himself as my father!"

These bitter musings lasted until the cab drew up before Langham's Hotel, and the youth got out and went into the house.

The boy, wrong in many instances, was right in this, that the secret of his birth could not be concealed from him.

His poor mother had never divulged it to him, never meant him to know that, the knowledge of which, she thought, would only make him unhappy; but she had told no falsehoods, put forth no false showing to hide it irrecoverably from him.

She was known among her poor Italian neighbors as Signora Valeria, and supposed by them to be the widow of that handsome young Pole to whom they had seen her married, and from whom they had seen her torn by her father, some years before. Of the Duke of Hereward, her second husband, and of her divorce from him, they knew nothing. But she was known to her father-confessor, to her news agent, and later to her son, as Valerie de la Motte Scott, for though no longer entitled to bear the latter name, she had tacitly allowed it to cling to her.

Now as to how the boy discovered the secret that was designed to be concealed from him.

When with childish curiosity he had inquired, his mother had told him that he had lost his father in infancy; and the boy understood that the loss was by death; but as time passed, and the lad questioned more

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particularly concerning his parentage, his mother, in repeating that he had lost his father in infancy, added that the loss had been attended with distressing circumstances, and begged him to desist in his inquiries. This only stimulated the interest and curiosity of the youth, and kept him on the *qui vive* for any word, or look, or circumstance that might give him a clew to the mystery. And thus it followed that with a mother so simple and unguarded as Valerie, and a son so cunning and watchful as Archibald, the secret she wished to keep he soon discovered. But he kept his own counsel for the sake of gaining still more information. And, at length, the full revelation and confirmation of all that he had suspected came to him in a manner and by means his mother had never foreseen or provided against.

Valerie had made a will, leaving all her property to her son, and appointing the Duke of Hereward as his guardian. After her death, all her papers and other effects had to be overhauled and examined and her son took care to read every paper that he was free to handle. Among these was a copy of the will of the late Waldemar de Volaski, by which he bequeathed to Valerie de la Motte Scott, Duchess of Hereward, all his personal property.

Here was both a revelation and a mystery! Valerie de la Motte Scott, his most unhappy mother, Duchess of Hereward! and his guardian, appointed by her—the Duke of Hereward!

Who was the Duke of Hereward? That he was a great English nobleman was evident. But aside from that, who and what was he?

The boy was in a fever of excitement. It was of no use to ask any of his poor Italian neighbors, for they

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knew less than he did. He had heard of a mammoth London annual, called *Burke's Peerage,* which would tell all about the living and dead nobility; but there was no copy of it anywhere in reach.

However, his mother's dying directions had been that he should proceed at once to England, and report himself to his guardian, that very Duke of Hereward so mysteriously connected with his destiny.

Intense curiosity stimulating him, he hurried his departure, and after traveling day and night arrived in London on the evening of the last day of May.

He waited only to engage a room at Langham's and change his dress, and partake of a slight luncheon, before he ordered a cab, drove to the nearest bookstore, and purchased a copy of *Burke's Peerage* for that current year.

As soon as he found himself alone in his cab again, he tore the paper off the book and eagerly turned to the article Hereward, and read:

"Hereward, Duke of — Archibald-Alexander-John Scott, Marquis and Earl of Arondelle in the peerage of England, Viscount Lone and Baron Scott in the peerage of Scotland, and a baronet; born Jan. 1st, 1795; succeeded his father as seventh duke, Feb. 1st, 1840; married, March 15th, 1845, Valerie, only daughter of the Baron de la Motte; divorced from her grace Feb. 13, 1846; married secondly, April 1st, 1846, Lady Augusta-Victoria, eldest daughter of the Earl of Banff, by whom he has:

"Archibald-Alexander-John, Marquis of Arondelle."

Then followed a long list of other children, girls and

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boys, of whom the only record was birth and death. Not one of them, except the young Marquis of Arondelle, had lived to be seven years old.

Then followed the long lineage of the family, going over a glorious history of eight centuries.

The youth glanced over the lineage, but soon recurred to the opening paragraphs.

" 'Married, March 15th, 1845, Valerie, only daughter of the Baron de la Motte.' That was my poor, dear mother! 'Divorced from her grace, Feb. 13th, 1846.' He divorced her, and what for! She was a saint on earth, I know! Perhaps it was for being *that* she was divorced! Let us see. 'Married secondly, April 1st, 1846, Lady Augusta Victoria, eldest daughter of the Earl of Banff.' Ah, ha! that was it! He divorced my beloved mother for the same reason that the tyrant Henry VIII. divorced Queen Catherine, because he was in love with another woman whom he wished to marry!"

(The study of history teaches as much knowledge of the world as does personal experience.)

"But here again," continued the youth. "He divorced my dear mother on the 13th of February, married his Anne Boleyn on the 1st of April—appropriate day—and I was born on the 15th of the same month! Yes! my angel mother and my infant self branded with infamy two months before my birth, and by the very man whom nature and law should have constrained to be our protector! Will I ever forgive it? No! When I do, may Heaven never forgive me!"

As the boy made this vow he laid down the "Royal and Noble Stud-Book," and took up the bulky letter that his mother had entrusted to him to be delivered to the Duke of Hereward. He studied it a moment, then had

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a little struggle with his sense of right, and finally murmuring:

"Forgive me, gentle mother; but having discovered so much of your secret, I must know it all, even for *your* sake, and for the love and respect I bear you."

He broke the seal and read the whole of the historical letter from beginning to end.

Then he carefully refolded and resealed the letter, so as to leave no trace of the violence that had been done in opening it.

Then he sat for a long time with his elbows on the table before him, and his head bowed upon his hands, while tear after tear rolled slowly down his cheeks for the sad fate of that young, broken-hearted mother who had perished in her early prime.

The next day, as we have seen, he went to Hereward House and presented his mother's letter to the duke. He had watched his grace while the latter was reading the letter. He had foolishly expected to see some sign of remorse, some demonstration of affection. But he had been disappointed. He had been received only as the son of some humble deceased friend, consigned to the great duke's care. His tender mood had changed to a vindictive one, and he had sworn to be restored to his rights, or to devote his life to effect the ruin and extermination of the house of Hereward.

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CHAPTER XX

THE DUKE'S WARD

THE next morning, at the appointed hour, the Duke of Hereward drove to Langham's, and sent up his card to Mr. John Scott.

The youth himself, to show the greater respect, came down to the public parlor where the duke waited, and after most deferentially welcoming his visitor, conducted him to his own private apartment.

"I see by your mother's letter, as well as by her will, that she has done me the honor to appoint me your guardian," said the elder man, as soon as they were seated alone together, and cautiously eyeing the younger, so as to detect, if possible, how much or how little he knew or suspected of the true relationship between them.

"My mother did *me* the honor to consign me to your grace's guardianship, if you will be so condescending as to accept the charge," replied the youth, with grave courtesy and in his turn eyeing the duke to see, if possible, what might be his feelings and intentions toward himself.

The duke bowed and then said:

"I would like to carry out your mother's views and your own wishes, if possible. She mentioned in her letter the army as a career for you. Do you wish some years hence to take a commission in the army?"

"I *did,* your grace; but now I prefer to leave myself entirely in your grace's hands," cautiously replied the youth.

"But in the matter of choosing a profession you must

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be left free. No one but yourself can decide upon your own calling with any hope of ultimate success. Much mischief is done by the officiousness of parents and guardians in directing their sons or wards into professions or callings for which they have neither taste nor talent," said the duke.

The youth smiled slightly; he could but see that the duke was utterly perplexed as to his own course of conduct, and to cover his confusion he was only talking for talk's sake.

"You will let me know your own wishes on this subject, I hope, young sir," continued the elder.

"My only wish on the subject is to leave myself in your grace's hands. I feel confident that whatever your grace may think right to do with me, will be the best possible thing for me," replied the boy, with more meaning in his manner, as well as in his words, than he had intended to betray.

The duke looked keenly at him; but his fair, impassive face was unreadable.

"Well, at all events, it is, perhaps, time enough for two or three years to come to talk of a profession for you. Would you like to enter one of the universities? Are you prepared to do so?" suddenly inquired the guardian.

"I *would* like to go to Oxford. But whether I am prepared to do so, I do not know. I do not know what is required. I have a fair knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and of the higher mathematics. I was in course of preparation to enter one of the German universities when my good tutor, Father Antonio, died," replied the youth.

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The duke dropped his gray head upon his chest and mused awhile, and then said:

"I think that you had better read with a private tutor for a while; you will then soon recover what you may have lost since the death of your good teacher, and make such further progress as may fit you to go to Oxford at the next term. What do you think? Let me know your views, young sir."

"Thanks, your grace; I will read with any tutor you may be pleased to recommend," respectfully answered the youth.

"You are certainly a most manageable ward," said the guardian, dryly, and with, perhaps, a shade of distrust in his manner.

The boy bowed.

"Well, since you place yourself so implicitly in my hands, I must justify your faith as well as your mother's by doing the very best I can for you. There is a very worthy man, the Vicar of Greencombe, on one of my estates, down in Sussex, near the sea. He is a ripe scholar, a graduate of Trinity College, Oxford, and occasionally augments his moderate salary by preparing youths for college. I will direct my secretary to write to him this morning to know if he can receive you, and I will let you know the result in a day or two."

"Thanks, your grace."

"And now how are you going to employ your time while waiting here?"

"By taking a good guide-book, your grace, and going through London. Your grace will remember that I am a perfect stranger here, and even one of your great historical monuments, such as Westminster Abbey or the

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Tower, has interest enough in it to occupy a student for a week."

"I commend your taste in the occupation you have sketched out for your time. I must request you, however, to take great care of yourself, and to be *here* every day at this hour, as I shall make it a point to look in upon you."

"Thanks, your grace."

"And now good-day," said the visitor, offering his hand, and then abruptly leaving the room.

The youth, however, with the most deferential manner, attended him downstairs and to his carriage, and only took his leave, with a bow, when the footman closed the door.

Again as soon as his back was turned upon his father, the youth's face changed and darkened, and—

"I bide my time—I bide my time," he muttered to himself as he re-ascended the stairs.

He had not deceived his guardian, however, as to the manner in which he meant to spend his time while in London. At this time of his unfortunate position he had not yet contracted any evil habits, and he had a genuine liking for interesting antiquities. So, after partaking of a light luncheon, he went out, guide-book in hand, and spent the whole day in studying the architectural glories and the antique monuments in Westminster Abbey.

The second day he passed among the gloomy dungeons and bloody records of the Tower of London.

On the third day he received another visit from the Duke of Hereward, who came to tell him the Reverend Mr. Simpson, the Vicar of Greencombe, had returned a

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favorable answer to his letter, and would be happy to receive Mr. Scott in his family.

"Now I do not wish to hurry you, my dear boy; but I think the sooner you resume your long-neglected studies, the better it will be for you," said the duke, speaking kindly, but watching cautiously, as was his constant habit when conversing with this unacknowledged son.

"I am ready to go the moment your grace commands," answered the young man.

"I issue no commands to you, my boy. I will give you a letter of introduction to Dr. Simpson, which you may go down and deliver at your own leisure. If you choose to spend a week longer in London, to see what is to be seen, why do so, of course. If not, you can run down to Greencombe to-day or to-morrow. It is about two hours' journey by the London and South Coast Railroad from the London Bridge Station."

"I will go down this afternoon."

"That is prompt. That is right. All you do, my boy, all I see of you, commends you more and more to my approval and esteem. Go this afternoon, by all means. I will myself meet you at the station, to see you off and leave with you my letter of introduction. Stay; by what train shall you go? Ah! you do not know anything about the trains. Ring the bell."

The youth complied.

A waiter appeared, a Bradshaw was ordered and consulted, and the five P. M. express train fixed upon as the train by which the youth should leave London.

The duke then took leave of the boy, with an admonition of punctuality.

"Well," said John Scott to himself, as soon as he was

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left alone, "if my father gives me nothing else, he is certainly disposed to give me my own way. Perhaps in time he may give me all my rights. If so, well. If not —I *bide my time*," he repeated.

At the appointed hour the guardian and ward met at the depot.

The duke placed the promised letter in the youth's hand, saw him into a first-class carriage and there bade him good-by.

John Scott sped down into Sussex as fast as the express train could carry him, and the Duke of Hereward went back to Hereward House, much relieved by the departure of the youth, whose presence in London had seemed like an incubus upon him.

The deeply injured boy had departed, but—so also had the father's peace of mind, forever! Certainly he was now relieved of all fear of an unpleasant ecclaircissement; but he was not freed from remorse for the past or from dread for the future.

He told the duchess that day at dinner that a ward had been left to his guardianship, that this ward was, in fact, the son of a near relation, and bore the family name, which made it the more incumbent upon him to accept the charge; and, finally, that he had sent the boy down to Dr. Simpson, at the Greencombe Vicarage, to read for the university.

The duchess was not in the least degree interested in the duke's ward, and rather wondered that he should have taken the trouble to tell her anything about him; but the duke did so to provide for the future contingency of an accidental meeting between the duchess and the boy, so that she might suppose him to be a blood relation, and thus understand the family likeness without

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the danger of suspecting a truth that could not be explained to her.

But the duke could not silence the voice of conscience and affection. The deeply wronged boy whom he had sent away was his own first-born son—the son of his first marriage and of his only love; and he had wronged him beyond the power of man to help! He was the rightful heir of his title and estates, yet he could never inherit them; he had been delegalized by his father's own hasty, reckless and cruel act; and for no fault of the boy's own—before he was capable of committing any fault—before his birth—he was disinherited.

All this so worked upon the duke's conscience that he could not give his mind to his ordinary vocations.

But about this time the duchess, through the death of a near relative, inherited a very large fortune, principally in money.

With this she wished to purchase an estate in Scotland. And so, when Parliament rose, the duke and duchess went to Scotland, personally to inspect certain estates that were for sale there; for the duchess said that, in the matter of choosing a home to live in, she would trust no eyes but her own.

It seemed, however, that neither of the seats in the market pleased the lady, and she had given up her quest in despair when the duke suggested that, before leaving Scotland, they should make a visit to the famous historical ruins of Lone Castle, in Lone, on Lone Lake, which had been in the Scott-Hereward family for eight centuries.

It was while they were tarrying at the little hotel of the "Hereward Arms" and making daily excursions in a boat across the lake to the isle and to the ruins that

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the stupendous idea of restoring the castle occurred to the duke's mind—and not only restoring it as it had stood centuries before, a great, impregnable Highland fortress, but by bringing all the architectural and engineering art and skill of the nineteenth century to bear upon the subject, transforming the ruined castle and rocky isle and mountain-bound lake into the earthly paradise and century's wonder it afterward became.

What vast means were used, what fortunes were sacrificed, what treasures were drawn into the maelstrom of this mad enterprise has already been shown.

It is probable, however, that the duke would not have thrown himself so insanely into this work had it not seemed a means of escaping the torture of his own thoughts.

He could restore the old Highland stronghold and transform the barren, water-girt rock into a garden of Eden, but he could not restore the rights of his own disinherited son.

He had consulted some among the most eminent lawyers in England, putting the case supposititiously, or as the case of another father and son, and the unanimous opinion given was that there could be no help for such a case as theirs; and even though the father had had no other heir, he could not reclaim this disinherited one.

It was not with unmingled regret that the duke heard this opinion given. It certainly relieved him from the fearful duty of having to oppose the duchess and all her family, as he would have been obliged to do, had it been possible to restore his eldest son to his rights; for the duchess would not have stood by quietly and seen her son set aside in favor of the elder brother.

The duke spoke of his ward from time to time, so

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that in case the duchess should ever meet him or hear of him from others, she could not regard him as a mystery that had been concealed from her or look upon his likeness to the family with suspicion.

But the duchess seemed perfectly indifferent to the duke's ward, or if she did interest herself, it was only slightly or good-naturedly, as when she answered the duke's remarks one day by saying:

"If the dear boy is a relative of the family, however distant, and your ward besides, why don't you have him home for the holidays?"

"Oh, schoolboys at home for the holidays are always a nuisance. He will go to Wales with Simpson and his lads when they go for their short vacation," answered the duke, not unpleased that his wife took kindly to the notion of his ward.

In due time the youth entered Oxford. The duke spoke of the fact to the duchess. Then she answered not so good-humoredly as before; indeed, there was a shade of annoyance and anxiety in her tones as she said:

"Oxford is very expensive and a young man may make it quite ruinous. I hope the youth's friends have left him means enough of his own. I would not speak of such a matter," she added apologetically, "only the restoration of Lone seems so to swallow up all our resources as to leave us nothing for charitable objects."

"The youth has ample means for educational purposes and to establish him in some profession. Of course, he cannot indulge in any of those university extravagances and dissipations that are the destruction of so many fine young men; but, then, he is not that kind of lad; a steady, studious boy, brought up by—a widowed mother and a priest," answered the duke with just

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a slight faltering in his voice in the latter clause of his speech.

"Such boys are more apt than others to develop into the wildest young men," replied the lady; and circumstances proved that she was right.

John Scott, at Trinity College, Oxford, passed as the grand-nephew of the Duke of Hereward and the next in succession, after the young Earl of Arondelle, to the dukedom.

The young Earl of Arondelle was still at Eton. And the duke determined to send him from Eton to Cambridge, instead of Oxford, where John Scott was at college, for the father of these two boys wished them never to meet!

At Oxford John Scott, as the grand-nephew of the Duke of Hereward, bearing an unmistakable likeness to the family and being, besides, a young man of pleasing address, soon won his way among the most exclusive of the aristocrats there, and pride and vanity tempted him to vie with them in extravagant and riotous living!

His income *only* was limited, his credit was *un*limited. When his money fell short, he ran into debt; and at the end of the first term his liabilities were alarming or would have been so to a more sensitive mind.

It is true, the amount was much greater than his inexperience had led him to expect; but he only smiled grimly when he had all his bills before him and had estimated the sum total, and he said to himself:

"If my allowance will not support me here like a gentleman, my father must make up the deficiency, that is all!"

The Duke of Hereward was indeed confounded when his ward wrote to him and told him boldly that he

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wanted fifteen hundred pounds for immediate necessities—namely, twelve hundred for the liquidation of debts and three hundred for traveling expenses.

But could he scold the poor, disinherited boy, who, left to himself at Oxford, had doubtless fallen among thieves and been mercilessly fleeced?

No; he would pay these debts out of his own pocket and write the young man a kind letter of warning against the university sharks.

The duke carried out this resolution, and John Scott, freed from debt and with three hundred pounds in his possession, went on a holiday tour through the country.

He had heard at Oxford of the rising glories of Lone, and determined to take his holiday in that neighborhood.

It happened that the Duke and Duchess of Hereward, with the Marquis of Arondelle and their attendants, went that summer to Baden-Baden. So when the Oxonian arrived at the "Hereward Arms," in the hamlet of Lone, and, from his age and his exact likeness to the family, was mistaken for the heir, there was no one to set the people right on the subject.

The obsequious host of the Hereward Arms called him "my lord" and inquired after his gracious parents, the duke and the duchess.

John Scott did not actually deceive the people as to his identity, but he tacitly allowed them to deceive themselves. He did not tell that he was the Marquis of Arondelle, neither did he contradict them when they called him so. Nor did his conscience reproach him for his silent duplicity. He said to himself:

"I *am* the rightful Marquis of Arondelle. They do but give me my own just title! If this comes to the ears of the duke and brings on a crisis, I will tell him so!"

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While he was in the neighborhood he went up to Ben Lone on a fishing excursion, and there, as elsewhere, on the Scottish estate, he was everywhere received as the Marquis of Arondelle. There John Scott first met by accident the handsome shepherdess, Rose Cameron, and fell in love for the first time in his young life.

We have already seen how the Highland maiden, flattered by the notice of the supposed young nobleman, encouraged those attentions without returning that love.

After this John Scott spent all his holidays at Lone and much of them in the society of the handsome shepherdess. His attentions in that direction were regarded with strong disapproval by his father's tenantry, but it was not their place to censure their supposed "young lord," and so they only expressed their sentiments with grave shaking of their heads.

During the progress of the work the ducal family never came to Lone, so that the tenantry there were never set right as to the identity of John Scott.

Only once the duke made a visit, to inspect the progress of the workmen. He stopped at the Hereward Arms, and there heard nothing of the pranks of John Scott, although upon one occasion he came very near doing so.

The landlord respectfully inquired if they should have the young marquis up there as usual.

The duke stared for a moment and then answered:

"You are mistaken. Arondelle does not come up here. Whatever are you thinking of, my man?"

The host said he was mistaken, that was all, and so got himself out of his dilemma the best way he could and took the first opportunity to warn all his dependents

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and followers that they were not to "blow" on the young marquis.

"He was an unco wild lad, nae doobt, but his feyther kenned naething about his pranks, and sae the least said sunest mended," said the landlord.

And thus, by the pranks of his "double," the reputation of the excellent young Marquis of Arondelle suffered among his own people.

CHAPTER XXI

RETRIBUTION

But a crisis was at hand.

The debts of John Scott increased every year, while the ready means of the Duke of Hereward diminished—everything being engulfed by the Lone restoration maelstrom.

The guardian determined to expostulate with his ward.

He went down to Oxford just before the close of the term. He found his ward established in elegant and luxurious apartments, quite fit for a royal prince, and very much more ostentatious than the unpretending chambers occupied by the young Marquis of Arondelle at Cambridge and ridiculously extravagant for a young man of limited income and no expectations like John Scott.

The duke was excessively provoked; the forbearance of years gave way; the bottled-up indignation burst

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forth, and the guardian gave his ward what in boyish parlance is called "an awful rowing."

"You live, sir, at twenty times the rate; your debts are twenty times as large; you cost me twenty times as much as does Lord Arondelle, my own son and heir!" concluded the duke in a final burst of anger.

John Scott had listened grimly enough to the opening exordium, but when the last sentence broke from the duke's lips the young man grew pale as death, while his compressed lips, contracted brow and gleaming blue eyes alone expressed the fury that raged in his bosom.

He answered very quietly:

"Your grace means that I cost you twenty times as much as does your younger son, Lord Archibald Scott, as it is natural that I should, being the elder son and the heir of the dukedom."

To portray the duke's thoughts, feelings or looks during this deliberate speech would be simply impossible. He sat staring at the speaker, with gradually paling cheeks and widening eyes, until the quiet voice ceased, when he faltered forth:

"What in Heaven's name do you mean?"

"I should think your grace should know right well what I have known for years and can never for a moment forget, though your grace may affect to do so—that I am your eldest son, the son of your first marriage with the daughter of the Baron de la Motte, and therefore that I, and not my younger half-brother by your second marriage, am the right Marquis of Arondelle and the heir of the Dukedom of Hereward," calmly replied the young man with all the confidence an assured conviction gave.

The duke sank back in his seat and covered his face

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with his hands. However John Scott had made the discovery, it was absolutely certain that he knew the whole secret of his parentage.

"What authority have you for making so strange an assertion?" at length inquired the duke.

"The authority of recorded truth," replied the young man emphatically. "But does your grace really suppose that such a secret could be kept from me? My dear, lost mother never revealed it to me by her words, but she unconsciously revealed enough to me by her actions to excite my suspicions and set me on the right track. The records did the rest and put me in possession of the whole truth."

"What records have you examined?" inquired the duke in a low voice.

"First and last, in Italy and France, I have examined the registers of your marriage with my mother and of my own birth and baptism, and in England Burke's Peerage. All these, as well as other well-known facts as easily proved as if they were recorded, establish my rights as your son—your eldest son and *heir*."

"As my son, but not as my heir, for your most unhappy mother——"

"STOP!" suddenly exclaimed the young man, while his blue eyes blazed with a dangerous fire. "I warn you, Duke of Hereward, that you must not breathe one word reflecting in the least degree on my dear, injured mother's name. You have wronged her enough, Heaven knows! and I, her son, tell you so. Yes, from the beginning to the end, you have wronged her grievously, unpardonably. First of all, in marrying her at all, when you must have seen—you could not have failed to see—that she, gentle and helpless creature that she was,

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was *forced* by her parents to give you her hand when her broken heart was not hers to give! And, secondly, when she discovered that the lover (to whom she had been sacredly married by the Church, though it seems not lawfully married by the State), whom she had supposed to be dead, was really living, and when she took the only course a pure and sensitive woman could take and withdrew herself from you both, *writing to you her reasons for doing so* and expressing her wish to live apart a quiet, single, blameless life, you did not wait, you did not investigate, but with indecent haste you so hurried through with your divorce and hurried into your second marriage as to brand my mother with undeserved infamy and delegalized her son and yours before his birth."

"Heaven help me!" moaned the Duke of Hereward, covering his face with his hands.

"You have done us both this infinite wrong and you cannot undo it now. I know that you cannot, for I have taken the pains to seek legal advice and I have been assured that you cannot rectify this wrong. But use my injured mother's sacred name with reverence, Duke of Hereward, I warn you!"

"Heaven knows I would use it in no other way. I loved your mother. She and you were not the only sufferers in my domestic tragedy. Her loss nearly killed me with grief even when I thought her unworthy. The discovery of the great wrong I did her has nearly crazed me with remorse since that."

"Then do not grudge her son the small share you allow him of that vast inheritance which should have been his, had you not unjustly deprived him of it."

"I will not. Your debts shall be paid."

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"And do not upbraid me by drawing any more invidious comparisons between me and one who holds my rightful place."

"I will not—I will not. John, we understand each other now. Your manner has not been the most filial toward me, but I will not reproach you for that. You say that I have wronged you, and you know that wrong can never be righted in this world. 'If I were to give my body to be burned,' it could not benefit you in the least toward recovering your position, but I will do all I can. I will sell Greencombe, which is my own entailed property, and I will place the money with my banker, Levison, to your account. I have a pleasant little shooting box at the foot of Ben Lone. We never go to it. You must have the run of it during the vacations. When you are ready for your commission I will find you one in a good regiment. In return I have one request to make you. For Heaven's sake, avoid meeting the duchess or her family. Do this for the sake of peace. I hope now that we *do* understand each other," said the duke with emotion.

"We do," said the young man, his better spirit getting the ascendency for a few moments. "We do, and I beg your pardon, my father, for the hasty, unfilial words I have spoken."

"I can make every allowance for you, John. I can comprehend how you must often feel that you are only your mother's son," answered the duke, grasping the hand that his son had offered.

So the interview that had threatened to end in a rupture between guardian and ward terminated amicably.

John Scott's debts were once more paid, his pockets were once more filled, and he left for Scotland to spend

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his vacation at the hunting-box under Ben Lone, in the neighborhood made attractive to him, not by black cock or red deer, but by the presence of his handsome shepherdess.

The duke sold Greencombe and placed the purchase money in the hands of Sir Lemuel Levison & Co., Bankers, Lombard Street, London, to be invested for the benefit of his ward, John Scott.

The unhappy duke did this at the very time when he was so pressed for money to carry on the great work at Lone as to be compelled to borrow from the Jews at an enormous interest, mortgaging his estate, Hereward Hold, in security.

And John Scott, with an ample income and without any restraint, took leave of his good angel and started on the road to ruin.

Meanwhile the great works at Lone were completed and the ducal family took possession and commenced their short and glorious reign there by a series of splendid entertainments given in honor of the coming of age of the heir.

John Scott was not an invited guest, either to the castle or the ground, but he presented himself there, nevertheless, and caused some confusion by his close resemblance to his brother and much scandal by his improper conduct among the village girls. And many an honest peasant went home from the feast lamenting the behavior of the young heir and trying to excuse or palliate his viciousness by the vulgar proverb:

"Boys will be boys."

And so the reputation of the young Marquis of Arondelle suffered and continued to suffer from the evil doings of his double.

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John Scott kept one part of his compact with the duke —he avoided the family. Even when he could not keep away from Lone, he contrived to keep out of sight of the duke, the duchess and the marquis.

The young Marquis of Arondelle, indeed, was very little seen at Lone. He was at Cambridge or on his grand tour nearly all the time of the family's residence in the Highlands.

John Scott left the university without honors. This was a disappointment to the duke, who did not, however, reproach his wayward son, but only wrote and asked him if he would now take a commission in the army. But the young man, who had lost all his youthful military ardor and contracted a roving habit that made him averse to all fixed rules and restraints, replied by saying that his income was sufficient for his wants and that he preferred the free life of a scholar.

The duke wrote again and implored him to choose one of the learned professions, saying that it was not yet too late for him to enter upon the study of one.

The hopeful son replied that he was not good enough for divinity, bad enough for law or wise enough for medicine; that, therefore, he was unsuited to honor either of the learned professions, and begged his guardian to disturb himself no longer on the subject of his ward's future.

Then the duke let him alone, having, in fact, troubles enough of his own to occupy him—a life of superficial splendor, backed by a condition of hopeless indebtedness.

We have already, in the earlier portions of this story, described the short, glorious, delusive reign of the Herewards at Lone and the culminating glory and ruin of

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the royal visit, so immediately to be followed by the great crash, when the magnificent estate, with all its splendid appointments, was sold under the hammer and purchased by the wealthy banker and city knight, Sir Lemuel Levison. We have told how the noble son—the young Marquis of Arondelle—sacrificed all his life interest in the entailed estate, to save his father, and how vain that sacrifice proved. We have told how the duchess died of humiliation and grief and how the duke and his son went into social exile until recalled by the romantic love of Salome Levison, who wished to bestow her hand and her magnificent inheritance upon the disinherited heir of Lone.

We have now brought the story of John Scott up to the night of the banker's murder and his own unintentional share in the tragedy.

At the time of the projected marriage between the Marquis of Arondelle and the heiress of Lone John Scott was deeply sunk in debt and badly in want of money.

The capital given him by his father had been so tied up by the donor that nothing but the interest could be touched by the improvident recipient. It had, in fact, been given to Sir Lemuel Levison in trust for John Scott, with directions to invest it to the best advantage for his benefit.

This duty the banker had most conscientiously performed by investing the money in a mining enterprise supposed to be perfectly secure and to pay a high interest. This investment continued good for years, affording John Scott a very liberal income; but as John Scott would probably have exceeded any income, however large, that he might have possessed, so of course he ex-

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ceeded this one and got into debt, which accumulated year after year until at length he felt himself forced to ask his trustee to sell out a part of his stock in the mining company to liquidate his liabilities.

This the banker politely but firmly refused to do, representing to the young spendthrift that his duties as a trustee forbade him to squander the capital of his client, and that he had been made trustee for the very purpose of preserving it.

The obstinacy of the banker enraged the young man, who protested that it was unbearable to a man of twenty-five years of age to be in leading-strings to a trustee as if he were an infant of five years old.

The time came, however, when the trustee was compelled by circumstances to sell out.

The rare foresight which had made him the millionaire that he was warned Sir Lemuel Levison that the mining company in which he had invested his ward's fortune was on the eve of an explosion. As no one else perceived the impending catastrophe, Sir Lemuel Levison was enabled to sell out his ward's stock at a good premium some days before the crash came—not an honest measure by any means, *we* think, but a perfectly business-like one.

He informed John Scott of the transaction, telling him at the same time that he had the capital of thirty thousand pounds in his possession ready to be reinvested, and the premium of three hundred pounds, which last was at the orders of Mr. Scott.

Mr. Scott was not contented with the three hundred pounds premium. He wanted a few thousand out of the capital and he wrote and told his trustee as much.

Sir Lemuel Levison was firm in refusing to diminish

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the capital that had been placed in his hands for the benefit of the spendthrift.

Then John Scott in a rage went up to London and called at the banking house of Levison Brothers.

Being admitted to the private office of Sir Lemuel Levison, the young man used some very intemperate language, accusing the great banker of appropriating his own contemptible little fortune for private and unhallowed purposes.

"You are the most unmitigated scamp alive, and I wish I had never had anything to do with you. However, I will convince you that you have wronged me and then I will wash my hands of you!" exclaimed the banker.

And so saying, he unlocked a great patent safe that stood in his private office, took from it a small iron box and set it on his desk before him, in full sight of his visitor.

"See here," he continued; "here is this box, read the inscription on it."

The visitor stooped over and read—in brass letters—the following sentence: "John Scott—£30,000."

"Now, sir," continued the banker, opening the box and displaying the treasure, all in crisp, new Bank of England notes of a thousand pounds each, "here is your money. I cannot betray my trust by giving it into your hands. But I intend, nevertheless, to resign my trust into the hands that gave it me. I am going down to Lone to celebrate the marriage of my daughter with the Marquis of Arondelle, and I shall take this box and its contents down with me. I shall, of course, meet the Duke of Hereward there. As soon as the marriage is over and the pair gone on their tour, I shall deliver this

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box with its contents over to the duke, who can then hand over any part or the whole of this money to you if he pleases to do so."

If any circumstance could have increased the uneasiness of the spendthrift it would have been this resolution of the banker and trustee.

John Scott begged Sir Lemuel Levison to reconsider his resolution and not return his capital to the donor, who, in his impoverished condition, might, for all he knew, choose to resume his gift entirely and appropriate it to his own uses.

But the banker was inflexible and the next day set out for Lone, carrying John Scott's fortune locked up in the iron box, besides other treasures in money and jewels, secured in other receptacles.

John Scott was in despair.

At length a daring plan occurred to his mind. His evil life had brought him into communication with some outlaws of society of both sexes, with whom, however, he would not willingly have been seen in daylight or in public. One of these—a brutal ruffian and thief with whose haunts and habits he was well acquainted—he sought out. He gave him an outline of his scheme, telling him of the great treasures in jewels and other bridal presents that would be laid out in the drawing-room at Lone on the night of the 6th of June in readiness for the wedding display on the morning of the 7th.

The man Murdockson listened with greedy ears.

The tempter then told him of the iron box, inscribed with his own name and containing *important papers* which it was necessary he should recover, and proposed that if Murdockson would promise to purloin the iron box from the chamber of Sir Lemuel Levison and bring

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it safely to him, John Scott, *he* would engage to leave the secret passage to the castle open for the free entrance of the adventurers.

Murdockson hesitated a long time before consenting to engage in an enterprise which, if it promised great profit, also threatened great dangers.

At length, however, fired by the prospect of the fabulous wealth said to lie exposed in the form of bridal presents displayed in Castle Lone, Mr. Murdockson promised to form a party and go down to Lone to reconnoitre, and if he should see his way clear, to undertake the job.

The plan was carried out to its full and fatal completion.

Disguised as Highland peasants, Murdockson and two of his pals went down to Lone to inspect the lay.

They mingled with the great crowd of peasantry and tenantry that had collected from far and near to view the grand pageantry prepared for the celebration of the wedding, and their presence in so large an assemblage was scarcely noticed.

They met their principal in the course of the day and with him arranged the details of the robbery.

One thing John Scott insisted upon—that there was to be no violence, no bloodshed; that if the robbery could not be effected quietly and peaceably, without bodily harm to any inmate, it was not to be done at all; it was to be given up at once.

The men promised all that their principal asked, on condition that he would act his part and let them into the castle.

That night John Scott did his work and attained the climax of his evil life.

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He tampered with the valet, treated him with drugged whiskey, and while the wretched man was in a stupid sleep, stole from him the pass-key to Sir Lemuel Levison's private apartment.

We know how that terrible night ended. John Scott could not control the devils he had raised.

Only robbery had been intended, but murder was perpetrated.

John Scott, with the curse of Cain upon his soul and without the spoil for which he had incurred it, fled to London and afterward to the Continent, where he became a homeless wanderer for years and where he was subsequently joined by his female companion, Rose.

CHAPTER XXII

AFTER THE REVELATION

During the latter portion of the mother-superior's story—the portion that related to the delegalized elder son of the Duke of Hereward—a light dawned upon the mind of Salome, but so slowly that no sudden shock of joy had been felt, no wild exclamation of astonishment uttered. Yet that light had revealed to the amazed and overjoyed young wife, beyond all possibility of further doubt, the blessed truth of the perfect freedom of her worshiped husband from all participation in the awful crimes of which overwhelming circumstantial evidence had convicted him in her own mind, but of which it was now certain that his miserable brother, his "double" in appearance, was alone guilty.

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The dark story had been told in the darkness of the abbess' den, so that not even the varying color that must otherwise have betrayed the deep emotion of the hearer could be seen by the speaker.

At the conclusion of the story one irrepressible reproach escaped the lips of the young wife:

"Oh, mother! mother! If you knew all this, why did you not tell me before? For you must also have known, what is now so clear to me, that not the Duke of Hereward, who, after all, is my husband, I thank Heaven—not the noble Duke of Hereward, but his most ignoble brother, his counterpart in person and in name, has married that terrible Scotch woman and mixed himself up in murder and robbery. Oh, mother! you should have told me before!"

"My daughter, be patient. Only this week have I been able to fit in all the links in the chain of evidence to make the story complete. Your mention of the Duke of Hereward as your false husband, my memory of the Duke of Hereward as the wronged husband who had slain my betrothed in a duel, all set me to thinking deeply, very deeply thinking. I did not express my thoughts unnecessarily. Silence is, with our order, a duty—the handmaid of devotion. But I set secret inquiries on foot, through agencies that our orders possess for finding out facts and means that we can use superior to those of the most accomplished detectives living. Through such agencies and by such means I learned not only external facts—which are often lies, paradoxical as that may seem—but I learned also the internal truths, without which no history can be really known, no subject really understood."

"But, oh, you should not have kept silence. You

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should not have left me to misjudge my noble husband a day longer than necessary!" burst forth Salome.

"Calm yourself, daughter, and listen to me. I have kept nothing from you a day longer than necessary. The facts that exonerate the Duke of Hereward came to me last of all. Hear me. From Father Garbennetti, the new cure of San Vito, I learned the truth of that miscalled elopement of the late Duchess of Hereward. I learned that—in the words of your own charming poet—

'My rival fair
A saint in heaven should be.'

For a most innocent and most deeply wronged and long-suffering martyr on earth she had been. From him I also learned the existence of her boy and the adoption of the boy, after the mother's death, by the Duke of Hereward. That was all I could learn from the Italian priest, who had lost sight of the lad after the mother's death. Next I pushed inquiries through our agents in England, and through the investigations of Father Fairfield, the eloquent English oratorian, I learned the truth of John Scott's life in England and Scotland as I have given it to you. I received Father Fairfield's letter only this day. Only this day I have learned, Salome, that you are really the Duchess of Hereward; that the Duke of Hereward was and is really your husband and was never the husband of any other woman."

"Oh, how bitterly, how bitterly, how unpardonably I have wronged him! He will pardon me. Yes, he will; for he is all magnanimity and he loves me. But I can never, never pardon myself!" exclaimed the young wife, her first joy at discovering the absolute integrity

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of her husband now giving place to the severest self-condemnation.

"You need not reproach yourself so cruelly, so sternly under circumstances in which you would not reproach another at all. Remember what you told me. You had the evidence of your own eyes and ears and the testimony of documents and of individuals against him," said the abbess soothingly.

"Yes, the evidence of my own eyes and ears, which mistook the counterfeit for the real; the testimony of documents that were forgeries and of individuals that were false. And upon these I believed my noble husband guilty of a felony, and without even giving him an opportunity to explain the circumstances or to defend himself, I left him even on our wedding-day and have concealed myself from him for many months, exposing him to misconstruction, to dishonor and reproach. Oh, no, I can never, never pardon myself. Nor do I even know how *he* can ever pardon me. But he will. I am sure he will. Even as the Lord pardons all repented sin, however grievous, so will my peerless husband pardon me!" fervently exclaimed Salome.

The abbess reverted to her own troubles.

"I cannot understand," she said, "the mystery of that man's appearance here this morning."

"What man?" inquired Salome, who was so absorbed in thinking of her husband that she had nearly forgotten the existence of other men.

"'What man?' Why, daughter, the Count Waldemar de Volaski—the man who came here with the woman this morning—the man whom you mistook for your own husband, the Duke of Hereward, but whom I knew to be Waldemar de Volaski, once my betrothed, who was

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said to have been killed in a duel, shot through the heart a quarter of a century ago," answered the lady emphatically.

Salome stared at the abbess for a few moments in amazed silence, and then exclaimed:

"Dear madam, good mother, are you still under that deep delusion?"

"Delusion!" echoed the lady.

"Yes, the deepest delusion. Dear lady, do you not know, can you not comprehend *now* that the man who visited us this morning was no other than John Scott, the counterpart whom even I really did mistake for the Duke of Hereward, as you say; and that the bold, bad beauty who accompanied him was his wife, Rose Cameron?"

"Nay, daughter, he was Count Waldemar de Volaski," persisted the abbess.

"What an hallucination! Dear lady, do you not see—but what is the use of talking? I cannot convince you of your mistake, but circumstances may; for, of course, sooner or later the unhappy man will be arrested and brought to trial for his share in the robbery and murder at Castle Lone."

"No, you cannot convince me of mistake, because I have not made any; but *I* will convince *you* of *yours*," said the lady, rising and striking a match and lighting a lamp, for they had hitherto sat in darkness.

Salome smiled incredulously.

The abbess went to a little drawer of the stand upon which her crucifix and missal stood and drew from it a small box, which she opened and exhibited to Salome, saying:

"This, daughter, is the only memento of the world

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and the world's people that I have retained. I should not have kept even this, but that it is the likeness of my once betrothed, bestowed on me on the occasion of our betrothal, cherished once in loyal love, cherished now in prayerful memory of one who I supposed had expiated his sins by death long, long ago. I have kept it, but I have not looked at it for twenty years or more."

Salome took the miniature and examined it carefully with interest and curiosity.

It was very well painted in water-colors on ivory. It represented a young man of from twenty to twenty-five years of age, with a Roman profile, fair complexion, blue eyes and blond hair and mustache; and so far as these features and this complexion went, the miniature certainly did bear an external and superficial resemblance to John Scott and to the young Duke of Hereward. But in character and expression the faces were so totally different that Salome could never have mistaken the miniature to be a likeness of the duke or his brother or either of these men to be the original of the picture.

After gazing intently at the miniature for a few minutes, she turned to the abbess and said:

"You tell me that you have not looked at this for twenty years?"

"I have not," said the lady.

"And you tell me that the man who visited the asylum this morning is the original of this picture?"

"I do."

"Then, dear mother, your memory is at fault and your imagination deceives and misleads you. Both the supposed original and the miniature are thin-faced, with Roman features, fair complexion, blue eyes and blond

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hair—points of resemblance which are common to many men who are not at all alike in any other respect. Now look at this miniature again, and you will see that, except in the points I have named, it is in no way like the man you mistook for its original."

"I would rather not look at it. I have not seen it since Volaski's supposed death," said the abbess, shrinking.

"Oh, but do, for the satisfaction of your own mind. You see so few men, that you may easily mistake one blond for another after twenty years of absence from them," persisted Salome, pressing the open miniature upon the lady.

So urged, the abbess took it, gazed wistfully at the pictured face and murmured:

"It is possible; I may be mistaken."

"You are," muttered Salome.

The abbess continued to gaze on the portrait and whispered:

"I think I am mistaken."

"I am *sure* that you are, good mother," said Salome.

The lady's eyes were still fixed upon the relic until at length she closed the locket with a click and laid it away in the little drawer, saying clearly and firmly:

"Yes, I see that I *was* mistaken."

"I am very glad you know it," remarked Salome.

"So am I. It is a relief. And now, dear daughter, I will dismiss you to your rest. To-morrow we will consult concerning your affairs and see what is best for you to do," said the abbess.

"I know what is best for me to do—*my duty*. And my very first duty is to hasten immediately to England, seek out my dear husband, confess all my cruel misap-

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prehension of his conduct and implore his pardon. I am sure of his pardon and of his love as sure as I am of my Heavenly Lord's pardon and love when I kneel to Him and confess and deplore my sins!" fervently exclaimed the young wife.

"Yes, I suppose you must return to England now. I do suppose that, after what we have discovered, you cannot remain here and become a nun," sighed the abbess, unwilling to resign her favorite.

"No indeed, I cannot remain here. But I will richly endow the Infants' Asylum, dear mother. And I will visit it every year of my life. I am going to retire now, good mother. Bless me," murmured Salome, bending her head.

"*Benedicite,* fair daughter," said the abbess, spreading her open palms over the beautiful, bowed head as she invoked the blessing.

Then Salome arose, left the cell and hurried back through the two long passages at right angles that conducted her from the nursery to the Infants' Asylum.

She passed silently as a spirit through every dormitory where her infant charges lay sleeping, assured herself that they were all safe and well, and then she entered her own little sleeping-closet adjoining the dormitory of the youngest infants, then disrobed and went to bed.

She was much too happy to sleep. She lay counting the hours to calculate in how short a time she could be with her beloved husband.

She had no dread of meeting him, not the least.

"Perfect love casteth out fear."

She arose early the next morning, and, after going through all her duties in the Infants' Asylum, she went

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to the lady-superior's sitting-room to consult her about making arrangements for an immediate departure for England.

"But shall you not write first to announce your arrival?" inquired the abbess.

"No, because I can go to England just as quickly as a letter can, and I would rather go. There is a train from L'Ange at five P. M. I can go by that and reach Calais in time for the morning boat and be in London by noon to-morrow—as soon as a letter could go. And I could see my husband, actually see him, before I could possibly get a letter from him," said Salome, brightening.

"If his grace should be in London," put in the abbess.

"I think he will be in London. If he is not there, I can find out where he is and follow him. Dear madam, *do* not hinder me. I *must* start by the first available train," said Salome earnestly.

"I do not desire to hinder you," answered the lady-superior.

Their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Sister Francoise, who pale and agitated sank upon the nearest seat and sat trembling and speechless until the abbess exclaimed:

"For the love of Heaven, Sister Francoise, tell us what has happened. Who is ill? Who is dead?"

"*Helas!* holy mother!" gasped the nun, losing her breath again immediately.

Salome drew a small phial of sal volatile from her pocket and uncorked and applied it to the nose of the fainting nun, saying soothingly:

"Now tell us what has overcome you, good sister."

"Ah, my child, it is dreadful! it is terrible! it is

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horrible! it is awful! But they are bringing him in," gasped Sister Francoise, snuffling vigorously at the sal volatile and still beside herself with excitement.

"What! what! Whom are they bringing in?" demanded the abbess in alarm.

"I'm going to tell you. Oh, give me time! It is stupefying, it is annihilating! The poor gentleman who has just shot himself through the body!" gasped Sister Francoise, losing her breath again after this effort.

"A gentleman shot himself!" echoed Salome in consternation.

The abbess, pale as death, said not a word, but left the unnerved sister to the care of Salome and went out to see what had really happened.

She met the little Sister Felicitie in the passage.

"What is all this, my daughter?" she inquired in a very low voice.

"They have taken him into the refectory, madam. That was the nearest to the gate, where it happened. It happened just outside the south gate, madam. They took off a leaf of the gate and laid him on it and brought him in," answered the trembling little novice rather incoherently.

"Daughter, I have often admonished you that you must not address me as 'madam,' but as 'mother.'"

"I beg your pardon, holy mother; but I was so frightened I forgot."

"Now tell me quickly and clearly what happened near the south gate."

"Oh, madam—holy mother, I mean—the suicide! the suicide!"

"The suicide! It was not an accident, then, but a sui-

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cide?" exclaimed the abbess, aghast, and pausing in her hurried walk toward the refectory.

"Oh, madam—holy mother!—yes, so they say. It is enough to kill one to see it all."

"Go into my room, child, and stay there with Sister Francoise until I return. Such sights are too trying for such as you," said the abbess as she parted from the young novice and hurried on toward the refectory.

CHAPTER XXIII

RETRIBUTION

She entered the long dining-hall, where a terrible sight met her eyes.

Stretched upon the table lay a man in the midst of a pool of his own blood!

In the room were gathered a crowd, consisting of three Englishmen, three gend'armes, several countrymen, several out-door servants of the convent, and half a hundred nuns and novices.

The crowd had parted a little on the side nearest the door by which the abbess entered, so as to permit the approach of an old man who seemed to be a physician, and who proceeded to unbutton the wounded man's coat and vest, and to examine his wound.

"How horrible! Is he quite dead?" inquired the abbess, making her way to the side of the village surgeon, for such the old man was.

"No, madam; he has fainted from loss of blood. The wound has stopped bleeding now, however, and I hope by the use of proper stimulants to recover him sufficiently to permit me to examine and dress his wounds,"

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replied the surgeon, who now drew from his pocket a bottle of spirits of hartshorn, poured some out in his hands, and began to bathe the forehead, mouth and nostrils of the unconscious man.

The abbess drew nearer, stooped over the body, and gazed attentively into the pallid and ghastly face, and then started with a half-suppressed cry as she recognized the features of the man who had visited the Infants' Asylum on the day previous, and whom the abbess now believed to be John Scott, the half brother and the "double" of the Duke of Hereward.

"Will you kindly order some brandy, madam?" courteously requested the surgeon.

"Certainly, monsieur," replied the lady-superior, who immediately dispatched a nun to fetch the required restorative.

As soon as it was brought, a few drops were forced down the throat of the fainting man, who soon began to show signs of recovery.

"I should like to put my patient to bed, madam; but the nearest farm-house is still too far off for him to be conveyed thither in safety. The motion would start his wound to bleeding again, and the hemorrhage might prove fatal," said the surgeon, suggestively.

The abbess took the hint.

"Of course," she said, "the poor wounded man must remain here. I will have a room prepared for him in our Old Men's Home. It will not take ten minutes to get the room ready, and carry him to it. Can you wait so long, good Doctor?"

"Assuredly, madam," answered the surgeon.

The abbess gave the necessary orders to a couple of young nuns, who hurried off to obey them.

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In less time than the abbess required, they came back and reported that the room was ready for the patient.

"Now, then, Monsieur le Docteur, you may remove your patient," said the abbess, courteously.

The surgeon, assisted by two of the countrymen, tenderly lifted the wounded man, and laid him on the leaf of the gate, and, preceded by an aged nun to show the way, bore him off toward the Old Men's Home.

One of the Englishmen and one of the gend'armes followed him.

The remaining two Englishmen and two gend'armes showed no disposition to depart.

The abbess was not too well pleased at this masculine invasion of her sanctuary, and so after waiting for some explanation of their presence from these strange men, she went up to them and inquired, with suggestive politeness:

"May we know, messieurs, how we can further serve you?"

"Your pardon, holy madam, but we are not willing intruders. I am Inspector Setter, of Scotland Yard, London, at your service. The wounded man is one John Scott, charged with complicity in the murder and robbery of the late Sir Lemuel Levison of Lone Castle. I bear a warrant for his arrest, countersigned by your chief of police. But for the prisoner's dying condition, we should convey him back to England immediately. As it is, we must hold him in custody here until the end," said the elder and more respectable-looking of the two Englishmen.

"I am very sorry to hear what you have to tell me; but since it seems your duty to remain here on guard for the security of your prisoner, I think it would be

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better that you should be nearer to him. The Old Men's Home will afford the most proper lodging for you as well as for him. One of my nuns will show you the way there, when a room near that of your wounded prisoner shall be assigned you," said the abbess, with grave courtesy, as she beckoned a withered old nun to her presence, and silently directed her to lead the way for the strangers to the lodging provided for them.

"John Scott, the half brother of the Duke of Hereward, charged with complicity in the murder and robbery at Castle Lone! Well, I am more grieved than surprised," murmured the abbess to herself.

Then she sent the younger nuns and novices about their several duties, and directed one of the elders to see that the refectory was restored to order.

The abbess was about to return to her own room when she was stayed by the re-entrance of Inspector Setter, the three gend'armes, and the countrymen.

The abbess looked up in a grave inquiry at this second intrusion.

"I beg your pardon, reverend madam; I have come to report to you the condition of your wounded guest, and to relieve you of the presence of these trespassers," said Inspector Setter, indicating his companions.

"Well, monsieur, what of the wounded man?" inquired the lady.

"The surgeon has dressed his wound, but pronounces it mortal. The man, he says, cannot live over a few days, perhaps not over a few hours. The surgeon will not leave him to-day."

"I am very sorry to hear that. Will you be so good as to tell me, monsieur, how the unfortunate man received his fatal injury? I heard—I heard—but I hope

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it is not true," said the abbess, shrinking from repeating the awful rumor that had reached her ears.

"You heard, holy madam, that he had committed suicide?" suggested the harder-nerved inspector.

The abbess bowed gravely.

"It is unfortunately quite true," said Inspector Setter. "You see, reverend madam, we traced him and his young—woman—I beg your reverend ladyship's pardon, holy madam—to Paris. Afterwards, we tracked them to L'Ange. We reached L'Ange this morning, and learned that our man had walked out toward the convent here. We followed, and came upon him near the south gate. I accosted him and arrested him. He was as cool as a cucumber, and quick as lightning! Before we could suspect or prevent the action, he whipped a pistol out of his breast-pocket, and presented it at his own head. I seized his arm while his finger was on the trigger; but was too late to save him. He fired! I only changed the direction of the ball, which, instead of blowing off his head, buried itself somewhere in his body. He fell, a crowd gathered, we picked him up, took a leaf of the gate off its hinges, laid him on it, and brought him in here. That is all, your reverend ladyship. The doctor says the wound is mortal; I must remain in charge until all is over; but I don't want a body-guard, and if your ladyship's politeness will permit me, I will dismiss all these men and see them out."

"Do so, if you please, Monsieur l'Inspecteur. Oh, this is too horrible!" said the abbess.

While she was yet speaking, the surgeon also re-entered the refectory.

"How goes it with your patient, Monsieur le Docteur?" inquired the lady.

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"He will die, good madam. Velpeau himself could not save him; he knows that he will die as well as we do, for he has recovered consciousness, and desired that a telegram be sent off immediately to summon the Duke of Hereward, whom he seems extremely anxious to see. I have written the message; here it is. I cannot leave my patient, or I would take it myself; but, Monsieur l'Inspecteur, perhaps you can provide me with a messenger to carry this to L'Ange," said the surgeon.

"Certainly," agreed Mr. Setter, taking the written message and reading it. "But you have directed this to Hereward House, Piccadilly, London?"

"I wrote it at the dictation of my patient."

"He is mistaken. The Duke of Hereward is living in Paris, at Meurice's. I will make the correction," said Mr. Setter, drawing from his pocket a lead pencil and a blank-book, upon a leaf of which he rewrote the message. He tore out the leaf, and read what he had written:

"To His Grace the Duke of Hereward, Meurice's, Paris: I am dying. Come immediately.

"John Scott, Convent of St. Rosalie, L'Ange."

"That will do," said Mr. Setter, inspecting his work. "Now, Smith," he added, handing the paper to one of his officers, "hurry with this message to the telegraph office at the railway station at L'Ange. See that it is sent off promptly, for it is a matter of life and death, as you know. Wait for an answer, and when you get it hasten back with it."

"All right, sir," answered the man, taking the paper, and hurrying away.

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The other men, whose services were no longer required, followed him out to go about their business.

The inspector and the surgeon, seing the lady abbess about to address them, lingered.

"I hope, messieurs, that you will freely call upon us for anything that may be needed for the relief of your patient, or for the convenience of yourselves," she said, with grave courtesy.

"Thanks, madame, we will do so," replied the surgeon, with a deep bow.

"And, above all, the interests of his immortal soul should be taken care of. If he should need spiritual comfort, here is Father Garbennetti, who will wait on him," added the abbess, solemnly.

"Your ladyship's holiness is very good. I happen to know the man is a Romanist, and if he should ask for a priest, I will let your reverend ladyship know," said Mr. Setter.

"Do so, Monsieur l'Inspecteur. And tell him the name of the priest I proposed for him—Father Garbennetti, of San Vito, Italy; for I have reason to believe that this holy father once knew your patient very intimately," added the abbess.

"Stay, now—what was the priest's name again? I never can get the name of these foreigners," muttered Mr. Setter, with a puzzled air.

"Father Garbennetti, of San Vito, Italy. But I will write it for you. Lend me your pencil and tablets, monsieur, if you please."

Mr. Setter placed his pocket writing material in the hands of the lady, with his best bow.

She carefully wrote the name of the Italian priest on

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a blank leaf and returned the pencil and the book to the inspector, who received them with another bow.

Doctor Dubourg and Inspector Setter then "bowed" themselves out of the lady's presence and returned to the bedside of the wounded man.

The abbess gave a few more directions to the lay sisters who were engaged in restoring the room to order, and then she withdrew from the refectory and returned to her own apartment, where she had left Salome and the little Sister Felicitie.

She found them still waiting there; and both engaged in the little bit of knitting or embroidery that they always carried in their pockets to take up at odd moments that would otherwise be wasted in idleness, which was held to be a grave fault, if not a deadly sin, by the sisterhood, and, besides, from the sale of this work they realized a very considerable income.

"I waited here, good mother, to learn more of the poor wounded man. Sister Felicitie tells me that he is a suicide. I hope that is a mistake," said Salome.

"It is too true, *helas!* But, my daughter," said the abbess, turning to the young nun, "leave us alone for a few minutes."

The little sister retired obediently, but very unwillingly, for she was tormented with unsatisfied curiosity concerning the unfortunate stranger, who had committed suicide at their convent gate.

"Salome! do you know, can you conjecture, who the unhappy man is?" solemnly inquired the abbess, as soon as she was left alone with her young friend.

"I do not know. I—*fear to conjecture,*" whispered the young wife, growing pale.

"Yet your very fear proves that you *have* conjectured,

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and conjectured correctly. Yes! the wretched suicide is no other than John Scott, the 'double' of the Duke of Hereward."

"Heaven of heavens! What drove him to the fatal deed? But why should I ask? Of course, it was remorse! remorse that was slowly killing him! too slowly for his suffering and his impatience!" exclaimed the young lady, with a shudder.

"Yes, it was remorse, and—*desperation.*"

"Desperation!"

"Yes! The English detectives had traced him down to this neighborhood; they followed him down here with a warrant for his arrest, countersigned by our chief of police. They surprised him near the south gate of the convent; but he was too quick for them; and before they could prevent him, driven to desperation, he caught a pistol from his pocket and shot himself through the body, inflicting a mortal wound. They brought him into the convent. I have had him placed in a comfortable room in the Old Men's Home, where he is attended by Doctor Dubourg, of L'Ange, who providentially happened to be passing the convent at the time of the occurrence."

Salome covered her face with her hands, and sank back in her chair, with a groan.

A few moments elapsed, and then Salome, still veiling her face, murmured a question:

"How long may the dying man last? Surely—surely—" Her voice faltered, and broke down with a sob.

"He *can* not last more than a very few days. He *may* not last more than a few hours," said the abbess, in a low tone.

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"Surely—surely, then," resumed Salome, in a broken voice, "he will make a confession before he dies. He will vindicate his brother, and so save his own soul."

"I think that he will do so, Sister Salome. Calm yourself. He has caused a telegram to be sent to the Duke of Hereward, calling him here."

Salome started and trembled violently. She could scarcely gasp forth the words of her broken exclamation:

"The Duke of Hereward! Called! Here!

"Yes, my daughter. So you perceive that your proposed journey to England is forestalled."

"My husband coming here! Oh! how soon will he come? He cannot be here in less than twenty-four hours, can he?" eagerly demanded Salome.

"He may be here in less than six hours. The Duke of Hereward does not have to come from London; he is not there, but in Paris; so you perceive, also, that if you had gone to England, as you proposed to do, you would have missed seeing him there," added the lady, smiling.

"My husband in Paris—so near. My husband to be here this evening—so soon. Oh, this is too much, too much happiness!" exclaimed the young wife, bursting into tears of joy.

"Then you have no dread of meeting him?" suggested the elder lady.

"'Dread of meeting him?' Dread of meeting my own dear husband? Ah, no, no, no! No dread, but an infinite longing to meet him. Oh! I know and feel how I have wronged him. How deeply and bitterly I have wronged him. But I know, also, how utterly he will pardon me. Yes, I know that, as surely as I know that

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my Heavenly Lord pardons us all of our repented sins!" fervently exclaimed Salome.

"Heaven grant that you may be happy, my child!" said the lady, earnestly.

At that moment the door opened, and an aged nun, one of the attendants in the Old Men's Home, entered the room.

"Well, Mere Pauline, what is it?" calmly inquired the abbess.

"Holy mother, I have come from Monsieur le Docteur to say that the messenger has come back from L'Ange, and brought an answer to the telegram. Monsieur le Duc d' Hereward will be here by the midday express from Paris, which reaches L'Ange at five o'clock this afternoon," answered Mere Pauline.

"Thanks for your news. Sit down and breathe after climbing all these stairs. And now tell me, how is the wounded man?' inquired the abbess, as the old nun sank wearily into the nearest chair.

"*Helas!* holy mother, he is sinking fast. The doctor thinks he will not outlive the night; and meanwhile he is anxious, so anxious, for the arrival of Monsieur le Duc! He asks from time to time if the duke has come, or is coming; if we have heard from him, and so on," sighed the old nun.

"But have you not soothed him by communicating the message received from the duke, that his grace will be here at five o'clock?"

"No, holy mother! for he was sleeping under the influence of opium, which the good surgeon had felt obliged to administer in order to quiet him just before the message came. If he wakes and inquires about the duke again, we will give him the message."

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"Quite right. Had the wretched man seen a priest, or asked to see one?"

"No, mother! but I was not unmindful of his immortal weal. I asked him if he would see Pere Garbennetti. He brightened up at the name, and inquired if le pere was here. I told him yes, and at his service, waiting to attend him, indeed. But then he gloomed again, and said no; he would see no one until he had seen the Duke of Hereward. He would rest and save his strength for his interview with the Duke of Hereward. I will return to my charge now, if my good mother will permit me," said the old nun, rising from her chair.

"Go, then, Mere Pauline, if you are sufficiently rested. Keep me advised of the state of your patient, but do not tax your aged limbs to climb these stairs again. Send one of the younger nuns, and give yourself some rest," said the abbess, kindly.

"*Helas!* holy mother, I shall have time enough to rest in the grave, whither I am fast tending," sighed the old nun, as she withdrew from the room.

"Oh, mother!" joyfully exclaimed Salome, as soon as they were left alone, "he comes by the midday express! It is midday now! The train has already left Paris! He is speeding toward us, even now, as fast as steam can bring him. I can almost see and hear and *feel* him coming!"

"Calm your transports, dear daughter; think of the dying sinner so near us, even now," gravely replied the elder lady.

"I can think of nothing but my living husband," exclaimed the young wife.

"Oh, these young hearts! these young hearts! 'From

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all inordinate and sinful affections, good Lord, deliver us!" prayed the abbess.

She had scarcely spoken, when the door opened and Sister Francoise entered the room.

"I came with a message from the portress, good mother. She says that a young woman has come from L'Ange, who claims to be the wife of the wounded man, and insists upon being admitted to see him. The portress does not know what to do, and has sent me to you for instructions," said Sister Francoise.

"The wounded man is sleeping and must not be awakened. Tell the portress to keep the young woman in the parlor until she can be permitted to see the patient, then do you go to the Old Men's Home, inquire for Monsieur le Docteur Dubourg, and announce to him the arrival of this woman, and let him use his medical discretion about admitting her. Go."

"Yes, holy mother," said Sister Francoise, retreating.

"You have not had a moment's peace since this unhappy man has been in the house," said Salome, compassionately.

"No," smiled the lady. "Of course not, but it cannot be helped. We must bear one another's burdens."

The loud ringing of the dinner-bell arrested the conversation.

"Come, we will go down," said the abbess, rising.

They descended to the refectory.

The long hall, that had been the scene of so much horror and confusion in the morning, was now restored to its normal condition.

The plain, frugal midday meal of the abbess and the elder nuns was arranged with pure cleanliness upon the table, where, but a few hours before, the body of the

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wounded man had lain. But the awful event of the morning had taken a deep effect upon the quiet and sensitive sisterhood. They sat down at the table, but scarcely touched the food.

When the form of dining—for it was little more than a form that day—was over, the abbess and her nuns arose, and separated about their several vocations.

Later on, the abbess sent a message to the Old Men's Home, inquiring after the wounded man.

She received an answer to the effect that the patient had waked up, and had been told of the telegram from the Duke of Hereward, and the expected arrival of his grace at five o'clock.

The news had satisfied the suffering man, who had been calmer ever since its reception. He had also been told of the arrival of his wife, but he had declined to see her, or *any* one, until he should have seen the Duke of Hereward. He was saving up all his little strength for his interview with the duke.

As the hours of the afternoon crept slowly away, the impatience of the young wife, Salome, arose to fever heat. She could not rest in any one room, but roamed about the convent, and through all its departments and offices, until, at length, she was met in the main corridor by the abbess, who gravely took her hand, drew it within her arm, and led her along, saying:

"Come into my parlor, child. The Duke of Hereward has arrived."

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE END OF A LOST LIFE

The Duke of Hereward knew nothing of his wife's presence in the Convent of St. Rosalie.

On his arrival, soon after five o'clock, he was met by the portress, who ushered him into the receiving parlor and sent to warn the abbess of his presence.

The abbess dispatched a message to the surgeon in attendance upon John Scott, and then sought out the young duchess to inform her of her husband's arrival.

Meantime Dr. Dubourg hurried down to the receiving-parlor to see the Duke of Hereward. They were strangers to each other, so the portress introduced them.

"I hope your patient is better, Monsieur le Docteur," said the duke, when the first salutations were over.

"No, I regret to say. There is, indeed, no hope. The poor man has been sinking since morning. He is most anxious to see your grace, before he dies, and that very anxiety, I think, has kept him up," gravely replied the physician.

"I am sorry to hear that. Is he in condition to see me now? Will not the interview tend to excite him and shorten his life?" anxiously inquired the duke.

"It may be so; but, on the other hand, his failure to see you might prove fatal to him sooner than his wound would. The fact is, sir, the man is doomed; his hours are numbered, and he knows it. He is eager to see you; he seems to have something weighing upon his mind, which he wishes to confide to you. He has been saving his little strength for an interview with you. He has

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refused to speak to any one, lest he should waste his forces and be too weak to talk to you."

"I will go to him, then, at once," said the duke.

"Do so, your grace, and I will attend you," said the doctor, with a bow.

The duke arose and followed the doctor through the long corridors and narrow passages leading from the Nunnery to the Old Men's Home.

On their way thither, the duke inquired how the patient had received that fatal wound, of which his grace had only heard a vague report from scraps of conversation among the officials at the L'Ange Railway Depot.

The doctor gave him a brief account of the arrest and the suicide.

The duke made no comment, but fell into deep, sorrowful thought, until they reached the door of the room in which John Scott lay mortally wounded.

The doctor opened the door and passed in with the duke.

It was a good-sized, square room, in which had once been placed four cots to accommodate four old men. Now, however, all the cots had been removed except the one on which the wounded man lay, and that had been drawn into the middle of the chamber, so as to give the patient a free circulation of fresh air, and to allow the approach of surgeon and attendants on every side. The walls were white-washed, the floor sanded, the windows shaded with blue paper hangings, and the cot-bed covered with a clean, blue-checked spread. Four cane chairs and a small deal table completed the furniture.

Everything was plain, clean and comfortable.

The doctor, with a deprecating gesture, signed to the

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duke to wait a moment, and went up to the side of the bed, and finding his patient awake, whispered:

"Monsieur, the friend you expected has arrived."

"You mean—the Duke of Hereward?" faintly inquired Scott.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Give me then—some cordial—to keep up my strength—for fifteen minutes longer," sighed the dying man at intervals.

The doctor signed to Sister Francoise, who sat by the bedside, to go and bring what was required.

The old nun went to the deal table and brought a small bottle of cognac brandy and a slender wine glass.

The doctor filled the glass, lifted the head of the patient, and placed the stimulant to his lips.

Scott swallowed the brandy, drew a deep breath as he sank back upon the pillow and said:

"Now, bring the duke to my bedside, and let everyone go and leave us together."

The doctor signed for the duke to approach, and silently presented him to the patient.

Then he beckoned Sister Francoise to follow him, and they left the room, closing the door behind them.

"I am sorry to see you suffering, my brother," said the duke, kindly, as he bent over the dying man.

"Ah! you call me your brother! You acknowledge me then?" said Scott, half in earnest, half in mockery.

"Most certainly I do acknowledge you, and most sincerely do I deplore your misfortunes," answered the duke.

Yet I have been a great sinner. I feel that now, as I lie upon my death-bed," muttered Scott, in a low tone.

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"I look upon you as one 'more sinned against than sinning," said the duke graciously.

"Yes, that is true also," murmured the dying man.

"But let us not dwell upon that. The past is dead. Let it be buried."

"Aye, with all my heart."

"You wished to see me."

"Yes, I did."

"To make some communication to me. Is it a very important one?"

"It is so important that I have risked my soul to make it to you."

"But how can that be?"

"Why, in this way. I have but little strength, I might have used that strength in making my confession to Father Garbennetti, and received absolution at his hands; but I was afraid of exhausting myself so that I should not be able to tell you what I have to communicate."

"I trust and believe that you have more strength than you suppose. Your eyes look bright and strong."

"That is the effect of the brandy. I never tasted better. Ah! they know what good liquor is—these holy sisters—no offense to them, bless them; their care has helped me; but I am going fast, for all that."

"You are at ease—you feel no pain?"

"No; but that is because mortification has set in. I feel no pain: I am at ease, only sinking, sinking, sinking fast. Will you pour out a little glass of brandy and give it to me? You will find the bottle and the wine-glass on the table," said the patient, who was visibly growing feebler.

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The duke went and brought the stimulant, and administered it to the dying man.

"Ah! that revives me! How long have you known that I was your brother?" Scott inquired, as soon as the duke had replaced the glass and returned to the bedside.

"Only since our honored father's death. I should at once have claimed you and carried out certain instructions he had left me for your benefit, in the letter in which he revealed our relationship—if—if—if—"

The duke, with more delicacy than moral courage, hesitated, and finally left his sentence incomplete.

"If I had not dishonored my family by committing a crime, and flying the country!" said John Scott, finishing the sentence for the first speaker.

"I did not say so," exclaimed the duke, flushing.

"But it was the truth nevertheless. And now before I begin my confession, will you please to tell me the nature of the revelation and of the instructions that my father left you concerning me?"

"Certainly. He told me the story of his first fatal marriage; of the divorce sought and granted under lying circumstantial evidence; of your birth some few months later—out of wedlock—although you were the son of his lawful marriage. He told me how impossible it was ever to restore you to your lawful rights, and he charged me to regard you as a dear brother, and share with you all the benefits of the estate, the whole of which would eventually have been yours had not your father's own rash act deprived you of the succession, and forever put it out of our power to restore you to it. I accepted the trust, and should have discharged it had you not left the country."

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"Well, I suppose the old man did as well as he could under the circumstances. He, too, was to be pitied. But now tell me, did *you* help to hark the bloodhounds of the law on my track?"

"No. From the time I received a hint from that wretched man, Potts, the valet, implicating yourself, I refrained from all action in your pursuit."

"I thought so—I thought so. You wouldn't like to help hang your own brother, even if he had deserved it; but he did not quite deserve it; and it was to explain that, as well as some other things, that I brought you here. You know so much already, however, so much more than I suspected you knew, that I shall not have a great deal to tell you; but—my strength is going fast again. I shall have to be quick. Give me another glass of brandy."

The duke complied with the man's request, and then replaced the glass again and returned to the bedside.

"I suppose I should not require that stimulant so often to keep up my dying frame, if I had not been so hard a drinker in late years. However, it is absolutely necessary to me now, if I am to go on. Come close; I cannot raise my voice any longer," whispered the fast-failing man.

The duke drew his chair as closely as possible to the side of the cot, took the wasted hand of his poor brother, and bowed his head to hear the sorrowful story.

In a weak, low voice, with many pauses, John Scott told the story of his life, from his own point of view, dwelling much on his mother's undeserved sorrows and early death.

He told of his own secluded life and education, and

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of his ignorance of his father's name until after his mother's decease.

He confessed the rage and hatred that filled his bosom on first learning that poor mother's wrongs, greater even than his own.

He spoke of the natural mistake made by the country people at Lone, who, misled by his perfect likeness to his brother, had received him and honored him as Marquis of Arondelle.

He admitted that their error flattered his self-love, and believing that he had the best right to the title, he allowed them to deceive themselves, and to address him and speak of him as Lord Arondelle, the heir.

He related the incident of his first accidental meeting with Rose Cameron, who, like all the other tenantry, mistook him for the young marquis, and so had her head turned by his attentions, and followed him to London, where he secretly married her.

This brought him to the time when the extravagance of his companion, added to his own expensive vices, brought him deeply into debt. He knew that his father had placed a large amount of money in the hands of Sir Lemuel Levison to be invested for his (John Scott's) benefit. He applied for a part of this money to pay his debts, but was refused by the trustee. Whereupon a quarrel ensued, which resulted in Sir Lemuel Levison's resolution to take the money down to Lone Castle and restore it to the original donor, that the latter might dispose of it at his own discretion.

This move maddened the penniless spendthrift. It drove him to desperation. He resolved to get possession of his money by foul means since he could not do so by fair ones; by violence, if not by peace. Circumstances

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had brought him to acquaintance with a pair of desperate thieves and burglars.

He sought them out, tempted them by the prospect of great booty for themselves, and arranged with them the whole plan of the robbery of Lone, stipulating that there should be no bloodshed at all; but that if the burglars were discovered before completing the robbery, they should seek rather to make their escape than to secure their booty.

But who can unchain a devil and say to him, "Thus far, no farther shalt thou go?" The instigator of the crime had no power over his instruments; on the contrary, they had power over him from the moment he called in their aid and became their confederate.

John Scott continued his confession by relating that he took the men down to Lone, disguised as countrymen, and led them to the castle grounds, where, lost in the great crowd that came to see the preparations for the wedding festivities, their presence as strangers was unnoticed; that at night he drugged the drink of the valet, stole the pass-key from his pocket, and through the secret passage under Malcolm's Tower he admitted the thieves into the castle, and by means of the valet's key passed them into Sir Lemuel Levison's bedroom.

He shuddered, failed, and seemed about to faint, as he recalled the horrible tragedy enacted in the room that night.

The duke gave him another small glass of brandy before he could revive and continue:

"Heaven knows, though under strong temptation, not to say under imperative necessity, I employed thieves and burglars, I was neither a robber nor a murderer in intention. I wanted to get my own money, withheld

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from me against my expressed desire—that was all. I do not say this to extenuate my crime, but to let you know the exact truth. I cannot dwell upon this part of the dreadful tale. You know already that the thieves murdered Sir Lemuel Levison in his chamber. It seems that he had not gone to bed, but had fallen asleep in his chair. He woke and discovered them. He was instantly about to give the alarm, when he was knocked senseless by Smith and killed by Murdockson. From the moment that I heard the old man was dead, although I had not intended the awful crime, I knew that I had actually occasioned it, and the curse of Cain was upon my head! I have not had a happy moment since. I fled the country, and stayed abroad until I heard that my wretched companion, Rose, was in trouble. Then I returned in disguise to see what was to become of her, resolved to give myself up to justice, if it should be necessary to vindicate her. But I found, by cautious inquiry, that she had been admitted as crown's evidence on the trial of the valet Potts, who was discharged from custody, on a verdict of 'Not Proven,' but that she was in prison again, on the charge of perjury, for having sworn—what she truly believed, by the way, poor wench—that the confederate of the thieves who murdered Sir Lemuel Levison was no other than the young Marquis of Arondelle. You were there, sir, and immediately proved an alibi?"

"Yes," said the duke.

"Rose was thereupon committed for perjury. I found her in prison on that charge when I returned to Scotland. I did not see her then. I was afraid to show myself, especially as I knew the girl felt very bitterly toward me, believing that I had willfully betrayed her

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into danger, when in point of fact it was her own dishonesty that led to her arrest. Her vanity tempted her to purloin and secrete a portion of the most valuable jewels from the booty that had accidentally in the confusion of the thieves' flight fallen into my hands along with the money that was my own. I had intended secretly to return the jewels upon the first opportunity, but the unfortunate woman secreted them, and denied all knowledge of them. After my flight she was so mad as to wear the watch in public, and to take it to a West End jeweler for repairs. Of course that jeweler, like others, had a full description of the watch, recognized the stolen property, and caused the arrest of the holder."

"We heard all that on the trial. Do not exhaust yourself by repeating anything that has already come to our knowledge," said the duke.

"I refer to this only to explain the bitterness of the girl's feelings toward me as the reason why I was obliged to keep concealed."

"But if the girl had been favorable toward you, would not it have been equally dangerous for you to have shown yourself?"

"Oh! no; my disguise was too complete. Besides, if I had not been disguised—you see in that neighborhood I had never been known as myself, but had always been mistaken for you—and the people were not undeceived up to that time. Give me a little more brandy. Ah! this spurring up a jaded horse! You see it does not get into my head. It only keeps up my sinking strength," added the man, after the duke had complied with his request.

"I remained in the neighborhood to see the result of Rose Cameron's trial for perjury. It was near the end

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of the term when she was arraigned at Banff. She would certainly have been convicted, for it was in evidence that she had sworn that the Marquis of Arondelle had been the confederate of the thieves and murderers, and had himself received and delivered to her the stolen booty; and her testimony was rebutted on the spot, not only by the high character and standing of the marquis, but by witnesses who proved an alibi for him. She would certainly have been convicted, I say, had not an unexpected witness appeared in her behalf. John Potts, the valet, who had been discharged from custody, came upon the stand, took the oath, and testified to the existence of a perfect counterpart of the Marquis of Arondelle, in the person of one John Scott, the companion of the accused woman, who had always foolishly believed him to be the young marquis himself. This testimony not only vindicated the accused woman from the charge of perjury, but opened her eyes to the facts of the case—namely; that I had never abandoned her to suffer in my stead while I went off to marry another woman, as she had supposed—that my only sin against her was in having allowed her to deceive herself in believing me to be Lord Arondelle."

The man gasped as he concluded the last sentence, and the duke said:

"You had better rest now. A little rest will do more good than any stimulant."

"You think so? Nay, rest would be death for me now. I must go on while my nerves are strung up; once they relax, I die."

"Very well; I am listening attentively."

"As soon as Rose was discharged from custody I sought her out, and there was a mutual explanation and

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reconciliation. But the testimony of John Potts, given on the trial of Rose Cameron, had placed my life in great jeopardy: so we secretly left the country. We went away separately for our greater security. I went first. Rose came on a week later. We met by appointment at L'Ange. In the obscurity of that village we hoped for safety; but I was tormented by remorse; for the murder of Sir Lemuel Levison lay heavily on my soul. There, my wife, Rose, gave birth to a little girl, whom we secretly placed in the rotary basket at the door of the Infants' Asylum attached to this convent. The good nuns received it, and cared for it. They called it *Marie Perdue,* 'Lost Mary.' After Rose's recovery, we went away, because it was not safe for us to remain so near home with such sharpers as English detectives and French police on our track. We took refuge in Italy, in the Sanctuary of the Holy See. We stayed there several months, when, thinking that all pursuit had been abandoned, and longing to see our child, we came on a flying visit to L'Ange. But the police were on the watch for us. I was arrested, as you have heard, on the day after my arrival. Quick work; but you see the chief of police here telegraphed the police in London, and brought the detectives hither within twenty-four hours. You know the rest. I am dying here by my own hand. It was a mad, rash, impulsive act, for which I am deeply sorry; but—I am dying in expiation of *my* share in the tragedy at Lone Castle."

The young duke took the emaciated hand of the failing man and pressed it in silence; he was too deeply moved to trust himself to speak.

"I have but this to say now. I leave a wife and help-

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less child. They are penniless and friendless. You will not let them starve," murmurd the man.

"Oh, no, no, I will care for them, believe me, as long as we all shall live," said the duke, earnestly.

"That is all. Bid me good-by now. And when you go out ask good Sister Francoise to send the priest," said John Scott, holding out his white, cold hand.

"I will. Good-bye. May our merciful Father in heaven bless and save you, my poor brother," murmured the duke, pressing that pale hand, laying it tenderly on the coverlet, and gliding from the room of death.

Ten minutes later, the good Father Garbennetti was closeted with his penitent, administering religious consolation.

When the last sacred offices were all performed, the priest retired, and the wife and child of the dying man were admitted to his presence, with permission to remain with him to the end.

In the meantime, the Duke of Hereward, conducted by Doctor Dubourg, traversed the long passages leading from the Old Men's Home to the convent.

As they went on, the duke gave the doctor instructions to supply the patient with everything that he should require during the last few hours of his life; and after death to take direction of the funeral, and charge all expenses to himself (the duke), adding:

"I shall, of course, remain at L'Ange until all is over."

"It will not be long, monseigneur. The poor man has been kept up by mental excitement and by strong stimulants all day long; there comes a fatal reaction soon, from which nothing can raise him. He will not outlive the day."

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"I am very sorry for him," murmured the duke.

"He was, perhaps, a distant relative of your grace. There is a slight family likeness," suggested the doctor.

"There is a very remarkable family likeness, and he is a very near relative," answered the duke, adding: "I hope you will kindly follow the instructions I have given you in regard to him."

"I will faithfully follow them out, monseigneur," said the doctor, with a bow.

At the entrance to the convent proper they were met by an elderly nun, who brought the lady-superior's compliments and begged leave to announce that refreshments were laid in the receiving-parlor, if the Duke of Hereward and Doctor Dubourg would do the house the honor to partake of them.

The young duke was tired and hungry from his long journey and longer fast, and gratefully accepted the sister's courteous invitation in his own and the doctor's name.

The nun led the way to the parlor, where a table was set out, not merely with slight refreshments, but with the first course of a dainty dinner, which the forethought of the abbess had caused to be prepared for her noble guest.

The duke and the doctor sat down to the table, and were attentively waited on by two of the elder sisterhood.

Notwithstanding the good appetite of the guests and the delicacy of the viands set before them, the meal passed in gravity and in almost total silence, for the thoughts of the two companions were with the dying man whom they had left in the Old Men's Home.

When they had finished dining, and had arisen from

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the table, a message was delivered by one of the old nuns who had waited upon them, to the effect that the lady-superior desired to see the duke in the portress' room for a few minutes, before his departure.

The duke immediately signified his readiness to wait on the lady, and followed his conductress to the little room behind the wicket appropriated to the portress.

CHAPTER XXV

HUSBAND AND WIFE

Two hours before this, the lady-superior had conducted the young duchess to the private apartment of the abbess, to await the issue of events.

Salome, pale, and trembling with excitement, sank into the nearest chair.

"You do not fear to meet the duke, my child?" inquired the abbess, uneasily, as she also dropped into her seat.

"Fear to meet my own magnanimous husband? Oh, no, no! I do not fear to meet him; but I long to meet him with an infinite longing!" fervently exclaimed Salome.

"I am very glad to hear you say so. And you are sure of his prompt and full forgiveness?" said the abbess, softly.

"Sure of his forgiveness!" echoed Salome, with a holy and happy smile. "Yes, as sure of his forgiveness as I am of the Lord's pardon!"

"And yet when he hears the truth and understands

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all, he will know that he has nothing to forgive. And he should know and understand everything before he sees you. For this reason, as well as for several others, I have brought you here, and I advise you to seclude yourself yet for a few hours. I do not wish you to see the duke, or even to advise him of your presence in the house, until he has seen the dying man and heard the confession of the truth from his lips. That confession will prepare your husband to receive and understand you, better than any explanation you could possibly make would do. It will also save you from the distress of having to make a long explanation. Do you understand me, my child?"

"Yes, dear mother, I understand, and thank you for your wise counsels."

"I have also given directions to Sister Dominica that after he shall have concluded his interview with Mr. Scott, and partaken of dinner, which will be prepared for him in the receiving-parlor, he shall be requested to meet me in the portress' room, where I propose to break to him the intelligence of your presence in the house."

"Thanks, dear mother! infinite, eternal thanks for all your great goodness to me," fervently exclaimed Salome.

"You are much too extravagant in your expressions of gratitude, my daughter! You exaggerate like a school-girl!" smiled the abbess.

"Oh! I will prove by my acts that I do not exaggerate my feelings at least!" persisted Salome.

And then, with girlish enthusiasm, she began to tell the lady-superior all she intended to do for the benefit of the convent charities, and especially for the "Infants' Asylum."

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The vesper-bell summoned them to chapel, where the evening service occupied them for an hour.

They then went to the refectory, and joined the sisterhood at tea.

In coming from the refectory, they were met in the corridor by old Sister Dominica, who stopped the abbess, respectfully, and said:

"I come, holy mother, to report to you that I have followed all your instructions. Monseigneur le Duc and Monsieur le Docteur have well dined. Monsieur le Docteur has returned to his patient. Monseigneur le Duc has gone to the wicket-room to await madame, our holy mother."

"Bien!" said the abbess. "I will attend his grace. Go, dear daughter, and await my return in my parlor. Sister Dominica, lead the way and announce me."

Salome, in obedience to the abbess' orders, went back to the lady-superior's private parlor to await, with palpitating heart, the issue of the lady's interview with the duke.

Sister Dominica deferentially led the lady abbess to the wicket room, opened the door, and said:

"The lady-superior of the convent to see Monseigneur the Duke," then closed the door after the abbess, and retired.

As Mother Genevieve entered the room, she saw standing there a tall, thin, distinguished-looking young man, with a pale complexion, blond hair and beard, and blue eyes. His face bore traces of deep suffering bravely endured. The gentle abbess sympathized with him from the depths of her kind heart, and for the first time felt glad that he would regain his wife, although by his doing so the convent would lose her fortune.

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"Monseigneur, the Duke of Hereward," she said graciously, advancing into the room.

"Yes, madam. I have the honor of saluting the Lady Abbess of St. Rosalie?" returned the duke, with a bow.

"A poor nun, monseigneur; who, as the unworthy head of the house, begs leave to welcome you here," humbly returned the lady, bending her head.

"Thanks, madam."

"It is a sad event which has brought you under our roof, monseigneur."

"A very sad one, madam."

"And yet, for your sake, a very fortunate one."

"May I be permitted to ask you, madam, in what way this misfortune can be fortunate?"

"I had supposed that you already knew that, monseigneur."

"Perhaps I do. I am not sure. I do not clearly comprehend, madam. Will madam deign to make her meaning plainer?"

"Yes, monseigneur, and you will pardon me if I enter too abruptly upon a subject at once painful and delicate."

The abbess paused, and the duke inclined his head in the attitude of an attentive listener.

"The young Duchess of Hereward, monseigneur?" said the abbess, in a low voice.

The duke started very slightly, but his pale face flushed crimson.

"Pardon, monseigneur. I am the more deeply interested in the young lady, for that she passed her infancy, childhood and youth—being nearly the whole of her short life, indeed, under this roof—where I stood in the position of a mother to her orphanage."

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"I knew, madam, that the motherless heiress was educated here," replied the duke, by way of saying something.

"You will, therefore, understand the interest I take in Madame la Duchesse, and forgive my question when I ask: Have you heard from her grace since she left her home?"

"You knew that she had left her home, then?" exclaimed the duke, in painful astonishment.

The abbess bowed assent.

"I hoped and believed that no one knew of her flight except the members of our own household, and the single confidential agent I employed to find her, and on whose discretion I could implicitly rely," said the duke, in a tone of extreme mortification and sorrow.

"Be tranquil, monseigneur, no one does know of it out of the circle of her own devoted friends, who can never misinterpret it."

"You know something of the duchess' movements, then? You know, perhaps, the cause of her flight—the place of her residence? You know—ah, madam, tell me *what* you know, I beseech you!" implored the duke.

"I know the cause of her flight, and justify her action even though she acted under a false impression. I know the place of her residence, and will tell it to you after you shall have answered one or two questions that I shall put to you. First then, monseigneur, when did you last hear of the duchess?"

"Some few weeks after her flight, I received the first and last news I have ever had of my lost bride. It came in a short and cautiously written note from herself. This note was without date or address. It was apparently written in kind consideration for me, but

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it contained no word of affection. It was signed by her maiden name and post-marked Rome."

The abbess smiled as she remembered that letter which had been written by Salome to put her husband out of suspense, and which had been sent by the mother-superior, through a confidential agent who happened to be going there, to be mailed from Rome, to put the Duke of Hereward entirely off the track of his lost wife.

"I have the note in my pocketbook. You may read it, madam, if you please," continued the duke, as he opened his portmonnaie and handed her a tiny, folded paper.

The abbess took it and read as follows:

DUKE OF HEREWARD: I have just arisen from a bed of illness which has lasted ever since my flight, and prevented me from writing to you up to this time.

I write now only to relieve any anxiety that you may feel on account of one in whom you took too much interest; for I would not have you suffer needless pain.

You know the reason of my flight; or if you do not, my maiden name, at the foot of this note, will tell you how surely I had learned that it was my bounden duty to leave you instantly.

I left you without malice, trying to put the best construction on your motives and actions, if any such were possible; I left you with sorrow, praying the Lord to forgive and save you.

I dare not write to you as I feel toward you, for that would be a sin.

I have entered a religious house, where, by prayer and labor, I may live down all "inordinate and sinful affections," and where I shall henceforth be dead to the world and to you.

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This, then, is the very last you will hear of her who was once known as SALOME LEVISON.

"She says you knew the cause of her flight. *Did* you know it, monseigneur?" inquired the abbess, when she had finished reading the note, and had returned it to the owner.

"I did not even suspect it, at first, madam. At the trial of John Scott, on the charge of murder of Sir Lemuel Levison, to which I was summoned as a witness for the crown, some facts were developed that first awoke my suspicions as to the cause of my wife's flight. These suspicions were further strengthened by the tone of her letter, received three weeks afterwards, and they were absolutely confirmed by a revelation I have received this day."

"From John Scott?"

"Yes, madam."

"You know the cause of your bride's flight, monseigneur. Do you blame her for it?"

"Under such circumstances, I honor her for it. She nearly broke her own heart and mine; but, as a pure woman, believing as she was forced to believe, she could do no less. Now, madam, I have answered all your questions. Now relieve my anxiety—tell me where she is."

"First tell me where you have been seeking her?" inquired the abbess, with a singular smile.

"In Italy, of course. Her letter was post-marked Rome, though without any other address," said the duke, lightly lifting his eyebrows.

"That letter was written in this house, and sent to Rome to be mailed thence, in order to put you off the

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true track of the duchess, monseigneur," said the abbess, with a smile.

"What do you tell me, madam!" exclaimed the duke, in surprise.

"Madame la Duchesse is under this roof, to which she fled for refuge direct from London!"

"Can this be possible, madam?"

"It is true! To whom, indeed, could the child come, in her extremity, but to me, the mother of her motherless youth?"

"Oh, madam, you fill my heart with joy and gratitude! My wife under this roof?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And safe and well?"

"Safe and well."

"Thank Heaven! Can I see her at once? Does she know I am here? Does she know—"

"She knows everything, monseigneur, that you would have her know, although she has not heard the confession of John Scott, which has just been made to you. She knows everything by means of the agencies I set to work to investigate the truth. And she knows that you will forgive her, through the intuitions of her own spirit."

"When can I see her, madam? Oh, when?" exclaimed the young duke, rising impatiently.

"This moment, if you please. She is expecting you. Follow me, monseigneur," said the abbess, rising and leading the way through the broad hall that stretched between the wicket room and the lady-superior's parlor.

When they reached the place, the abbess said:

"Enter, monseigneur. You will find the duchess alone, within."

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And she opened the door and admitted him, then closed it behind him, and paced slowly away from the spot.

As the duke advanced into the room, so silently that his footsteps were unheard, he saw his wife sitting within the recess of the solitary window. She wore a simple dress of black serge, with a white collar and white cuffs, such as she had worn ever since her entrance into the convent. Her head was turned toward the window and bowed upon her hand in an attitude of meditation. She neither saw nor heard the soft approach of the duke. He stood gazing on her with infinite pity, for a moment, and then laying his hand gently on her shoulder, whispered:

"Salome!"

She started up with a wild cry of joy! She would have sunk down at his feet, but he caught her to his bosom, held her there, stroking her hair, kissing her face, murmuring in her ear:

"Salome, Salome, my sweet wife, Salome! Oh, how thankful! Oh, how glad I am to meet you!"

She could not answer him. She could not speak. She was overwhelmed by his goodness. She could only burst into tears and weep like a storm upon his bosom.

He sat down on the sofa, and drew her to his side, keeping his arm around her and resting her head upon his bosom, while still he smoothed her hair with his hands, and kissed her from time to time, until she ceased to weep.

"I can never forgive myself," she murmured at length —"never forgive myself for the deep wrong I have done your noble nature; nor do I ask you to forgive me; because—because your every tone and look and gesture

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expresses the full forgiveness you are too delicate and generous to speak!"

"No, sweet wife, do not ask me to forgive you; for you have done no willful wrong that needs forgiveness. And I have no forgiveness for you, sweet, but only love! infinite, eternal love! Our past is dead and buried. Let it be forgotten. You will leave this house with me this evening, love. And as soon as our duties will release us from this neighborhood we will return to England, where a host of friends will welcome us home. And here is something that will surprise and please you, love. Your flight is not known to the world. We are believed to be living in Italy together, where I have been traveling alone in secret search for you these many months. We shall return to society as from a lengthened wedding tour. Come, love, will you go away with me this very evening?"

"I will go anywhere, do anything you wish—for, under God, henceforth I have no will but yours, oh, my lord and love!" murmured the young wife, sweetly and solemnly, as she turned her face to his, and he sealed her promise with an earnest kiss.

The same evening the Duke of Hereward took his recovered bride to the pretty, rustic inn at L'Ange, and installed her in a pleasant suite of apartments. They remained at L'Ange until after the funeral of poor John Scott, whose body was interred in the little cemetery by St. Marie L'Ange.

The young Duke of Hereward defrayed all the expenses of the burial, and settled upon the widow an income sufficient to enable her to live in comfort and respectability. With the full consent of the unloving mother, who was but too willing to be relieved of her

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incumbrance, the young Duchess of Hereward adopted little Marie Perdue; "perdue" no longer, but the cherished pet of a fond foster-mother.

Before leaving France, the Duke and Duchess of Hereward richly endowed the charities of the Convent of St. Rosalie, which had been so long the refuge of the lost bride. The duchess took an affectionate leave of the gentle abbess and her simple nuns, who had for so many months been her only companions. She promised to make them an annual visit.

The young duke took his recovered bride over to England, then on to Scotland, and finally to their beautiful home, Lone Castle, where the young couple were received by their tenantry with great rejoicings.

THE END

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In point of publication, "Darnley" is that work by Mr. James which follows "Richelieu," and, if rumor can be credited, it was owing to the advice and insistence of our own Washington Irving that we are indebted primarily for the story, the young author questioning whether he could properly paint the difference in the characters of the two great cardinals. And it is not surprising that James should have hesitated; he had been eminently successful in giving to the world the portrait of Richelieu as a man, and by attempting a similar task with Wolsey as the theme, was much like tempting fortune. Irving insisted that "Darnley" came naturally in sequence, and this opinion being supported by Sir Walter Scott, the author set about the work.

As a historical romance "Darnley" is a book that can be taken up pleasurably again and again, for there is about it that subtle charm which those who are strangers to the works of G. P. R. James have claimed was only to be imparted by Dumas.

If there was nothing more about the work to attract especial attention, the account of the meeting of the kings on the historic "field of the cloth of gold" would entitle the story to the most favorable consideration of every reader.

There is really but little pure romance in this story, for the author has taken care to imagine love passages only between those whom history has credited with having entertained the tender passion one for another, and he succeeds in making such lovers as all the world must love.

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THE SPIRIT OF THE BORDER. A Romance of the Early Settlers in the Ohio Valley. By Zane Grey. Cloth. 12mo. with four illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, $1.00.

A book rather out of the ordinary is this "Spirit of the Border." The main thread of the story has to do with the work of the Moravian missionaries in the Ohio Valley. Incidentally the reader is given details of the frontier life of those hardy pioneers who broke the wilderness for the planting of this great nation. Chief among these, as a matter of course, is Lewis Wetzel, one of the most peculiar, and at the same time the most admirable of all the brave men who spent their lives battling with the savage foe, that others might dwell in comparative security.

Details of the establishment and destruction of the Moravian "Village of Peace" are given at some length, and with minute description. The efforts to Christianize the Indians are described as they never have been before, and the author has depicted the characters of the leaders of the several Indian tribes with great care, which of itself will be of interest to the student.

By no means least among the charms of the story are the vivid word-pictures of the thrilling adventures, and the intense paintings of the beauties of nature, as seen in the almost unbroken forests.

It is the spirit of the frontier which is described, and one can by it, perhaps, the better understand why men, and women, too, willingly braved every privation and danger that the westward progress of the star of empire might be the more certain and rapid. A love story, simple and tender, runs through the book.

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